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NARRATIVE

OF A

CAPTIVITY IN FRANCE,

FROM

1809 TO 1814.

Printed by GEORGE SMITH, Liverpool.

NARRATIVE

OF A

CAPTIVITY IN FRANCE,

FROM

1809 TO 1814.

BY RICHARD LANGTON.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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TO

THOSE WHO DURING THE LATE

WAR

WERE PRISONERS IN FRANCE,

This Narrative

OF A

CAPTIVITY IN THAT COUNTRY,

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY A

FELLOW CAPTIVE.

PREFACE.

THE following Narrative is a faithful transcript of the Author's journal during the eventful period of his captivity.

To his companions in misfortune it may recall the memory of past sufferings, not always unvisited by occasional gleams of passing sunshine; and to the reader, he trusts it will be found not altogether uninteresting.

Aiming at little more, the Author respectfully presents his work to the public eye, as one possessing, if nothing higher, at least the merit that may be fairly claimed for simplicity and truth.

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NARRATIVE, &c.

CHAPTER I.

VOYAGE AND CAPTURE——OCCURRENCES ON BOARD THE FRENCH LINE OF BATTLE SHIP, LE POLONAIS——ARRIVAL AT CHERBOURG——LANDING IN FRANCE.

On the 18th May, 1809, I left Liverpool, in the brig Scorpion, on a voyage for the West Indies, and was soon borne by a favourable breeze out of sight of the shores of the Mersey.

Nothing remarkable occurred until the third day after sailing; when, off St. David's Head, two large ships were seen, standing under easy sail, up Channel. At this period, British men of war were constantly met with not only on the high seas, but likewise in the navigable waters of the united kingdom, their appearance was

therefore, a mere matter of every day occurrence; probably some careless remark that these must be king's ships, bound for Cork, might be all the notice taken of the vessels I have mentioned. Even when upon seeing us, they changed their course, and made more sail, the prevailing opinion on board was, that nothing was intended beyond a visit for the purpose of impressing some of our crew, and as there was little hope of evading this, no effort to escape was made, lest by prolonging the chase we should incur the risk of being more harshly treated when boarded.

After half an hour's chase, the nearest ship fired twice, her shot falling short, and bounding on the water. The one to leeward, on coming within range, likewise commenced firing; but her shot, though better aimed, did not reach us.

About 5 p.m. it was distinctly to be seen that they were ships of the line. The colours were run up, presuming they had taken our vessel for a French privateer, and had fired in mistake: still to our astonishment it continued at intervals, until two shots threatened to hull us: one hitting

the water a short distance astern, the second whizzing over the mast-head. The danger of continuing the attempt to outsail these ships was now palpable. Our vessel was hove to, and the colours struck.

In great anxiety we waited the issue of this strange adventure, but never dreamed these men of war could belong to an enemy, so near our own shores. However, we were not left much longer uncertain of the bitter truth. The headmost ship passing a short distance astern, hailed in English. The answer was followed by orders to drop under her lee quarter.

The consternation of all on board might be read in their looks—now in the power of two French ships of the line, the terrors of a captivity in France were aggravated by the sad remembrance that the war had continued for six years without any exchange of prisoners.

These vessels proved to be the Polonais and Courageaux, each of 74 guns, under the orders of commodore Troude, from the Saints, (islands near Guadaloupe) bound for the first port, which a want of vigilance on the part of the British

blockading fleets might allow them to enter. Each ship now lowered their boats: they were soon alongside—the crews jumped on board cutlass in hand.* The officer in command, who spoke English remarkably well, rudely asked for the captain. He stepped forward, and was received with angry abuse, viz:—"why the h–ll did you not heave to, the first moment we fired? —you deserve to be sent to the bottom every d—l of you."

It is not easy to give an idea of the filthy, ruffian-like dress and looks of the men in whose power we had so unexpectedly fallen; they had more the appearance of pirates than seamen belonging to any regular navy,—their actions and looks corresponded. This was to be seen in the eager haste with which the cabin and forecastle were rummaged. The locks, drawers, and trunks, &c. were broken open with a rapidity scarcely to be described. We were thrust into

* At this time we were not a cable's length from the Polonais. The Courageaux was fast coming up. In such a position, it may be inquired, where was the necessity of all this parade of armed force in taking possession of a vessel little exceeding 160 tons burthen, lightly manned and armed.

the boats, with little more time than enabled each to secure what money he might have ready to conceal on his person. A short row brought us alongside the Polonais. I was the first who ascended the ship's side, by orders from the officer in charge of the boat. On reaching the gangway, a lieutenant, who likewise spoke English well, desired I would follow him. Even amidst all my chagrin, I was struck with the curious scene afforded on viewing for the first time so large a vessel, crowded with a rough and unsightly crew. When ushered into the presence of the commander, (a slightly made man, under the middle size, who never could have been supposed, from any thing in his appearance, to be the first officer of such a ship,*) a short dialogue passed between us, the officer by whom I had been conducted, acting as interpreter.

* He was dressed in a blue surtout, close-buttoned—black stock, and blue cloth cap, with gold band and a small tricolor cockade in front. He wore three decorations—two small stars, each hung by a red ribbon, and the third attached to a light blue one pierced with white. He seemed in bad health, and without the coarseness of appearance we remarked in the other officers.

To the questions put by the captain, viz:— who I was, where our vessel was bound to, of what the cargo consisted, if we had seen any English men of war, and the name of the admiral who commanded on the Cork station— I replied to the best of my ability. When leaving the cabin he re-called me, to ask what was the news from the grande armée, whether our papers said where the emperor was, and if a great battle had not been fought.* He then directed the officer in attendance to take me away. The captain of our brig was then summoned to the cabin, and a similar string of questions were put to him.

On returning to the quarter-deck I found our crew collected between two of the carronades; their object in keeping so close together being to preserve the few articles which each had been able to save. It was evident the number of French sailors, crowding round, had other motives

* At this period France and Austria, it will be recollected, were at war. Napoleon, by the accounts received the day previous to our sailing, was said to be about to enter Vienna. This was not, however, communicated to this officer.

beyond those of curiosity to gratify, and a sharp look was necessary. In this unpleasant position, the butt of ridicule and abuse, we had to remain until 8 o'clock. Orders were then given for our removal to the lower deck.

The boatswain was our conductor; he had been a prisoner in England, from whence he had contrived to escape. He said, "You must make the best shift you can for to-night, to-morrow you will have hammocks and blankets." Here, as upon deck, we were compelled to keep in a close body. Hands, though unseen, were felt during the night. One of these, our sailors succeeded in grappling with, and though in the dark the punishment inflicted (which was severe) had the effect of putting an end to these attempts at robbery for the remainder of the night. As may be imagined it passed miserably, with no other covering than the dress we had come on board in, which was a poor defence against the cold, lying upon the hard deck, and forced to keep a perpetual watch: in such a situation it will readily be believed sleep was unattainable, and the morning was welcomed, almost careless what evil it might bring.

At 8 a. m. of the following day, the 25th May, we were mustered on the quarter deck; the name, occupation, &c. of each was taken in writing by the captain's clerk. The captain of our vessel and myself were placed in the mess of the warrant officers. The seamen had provisions served out to them on the same allowance as the crew of the Polonais—each was provided with a blanket and hammock to be swung in the lower hold. There the stench was inconceivable, owing to bilge water, rotten wood used for stowing the water casks, as well as cordage, damp sails, &c. Except the crew of a small vessel taken on her passage from Fayal to London, we were the sole tenants of this dark and unwholesome den.

Both ships were upon short allowance, but more particularly of water, not having been able to obtain any great supply at the small islands they had quitted. That brought from France was execrably bad, nearly as dark coloured as brandy, which must have been owing to the filthy state of the casks, yet this fetid stuff was doled out carefully. Our breakfast was merely a small glass of brandy, and one brown biscuit

to each. Dinner consisted of what they called soup, (the water in which salt beef and pork had been boiled, with small quantities of peas and calavances) pieces of meat about a quarter of a pound each, a brown biscuit, one tumbler of poor red wine, and half a pint of water each man. Previous to being ordered to the lower hold for the night, supper was served in the gun room, of the meat which had been left at dinner. A piece of Dutch cheese, a brown biscuit, and a tumbler of red wine to each—such was the mess of the warrant officers of the Polonais.

The number of sick on board was represented to be from 250 to 300, the greater part suffering from the effect of the climate they had recently quitted, Deaths were frequent, and we supposed the burials were made through the lower deck ports before day light, as we never witnessed any. On the 25th the weather changing, became boisterous. The wind veered from S. S.W. to N.N.W. with rain; sail had frequently to be taken in. The lubberly way in which this was done amused our sailors greatly. In the afternoon of that day, the foresail, owing as it was said to

the weather tack giving way, got loose; the noise caused by its furious flapping, added to that of the wind through the rigging, a hundred voices, some through trumpets, all bawling together, and the whistle of the boatswain striving to be heard over all, formed a tumult which must have been heard to be fully conceived. Each was giving orders, yet no one dared to go near to clue up the sail, it was not till the lapse of nearly half an hour that the tack was made secure, and the foresail again set. This done, order was restored.* The officers who had remarked the mirth which this scene had afforded our sailors, ordered their removal to the lower hold, from whence they were not permitted to ascend for the remainder of the day.

Our vessel immediately upon her capture was taken in tow by the Polonais. The sails were handed, and she was secured by a cable passed

* Napoleon, in conversation with Captain Maitland, of the Bellerephon, when speaking of the difference between French sailors and ours, remarked, "It surprises me when "any thing has suddenly to be done, our sailors are all "in confusion, and are seen running about gabbling like so "many geese, whilst yours quietly attend to the orders "they receive."—*Captain Maitland's Narrative.*

through the gun room port astern, lashed round the mizen mast of that ship. It was evident from this proceeding the cargo was considered too valuable to be destroyed.

Notwithstanding the effluvium of the lower hold, we managed to get through the night of the 25th tolerably well. The hammock and blanket (for the cleanliness of which much cannot be said) gave some chance for sleep, of which the cold and the hardness of the deck had wholly deprived us the previous night.

During the 26th the weather continued as unfavourable as on the former day, and prevented the removal of the cargo of our ill-fated vessel. On the 27th becoming more moderate, boats from both ships were engaged in the transfer, and as nearly as an opinion could be formed, about one-third of the cargo was conveyed on board the respective ships. At 3 p. m. a sudden stop was put to this operation by the unwelcome appearance of two English men of war, a frigate and a brig. The boats were quickly hauled in, and our vessel having been scuttled, went down. Her disappearance did away with the hope we had

entertained, that after the cargo had been taken out she might be given up to us, and others of our countrymen who were reported to be on board the Courageaux. The two ships coming within hail, a conversation, unintelligible to us, was carried on for a short time; afterwards a press of sail was made. The Polonais had greatly the advantage of her consort in point of sailing, and it frequently occurred she had to lay to, or take in, to keep near her.

About six o'clock several vessels appeared on the horizon. They could not have been British men of war, otherwise they would have directed their course towards us. At half-past six the brig parted from the frigate, firing at intervals, which made the French officers imagine a British squadron was at hand. Between seven and eight the frigate began to near the Courageaux. To prepare for events during the night, (it was to be supposed the object of the brig's standing away to the westward, was to apprise an English squadron of the situation in which the French ships were,) the Polonais was cleared for action. With the exception of the captains and mates

of the two captured vessels and myself, all the prisoners on board were placed in irons in the lower hold.* This night was one of extreme anxiety for all. Our squadron is at hand, depend upon it, else why has the brig separated from the frigate? was the remark frequently made. It passed over without any thing extraordinary occurring, though guns were fired and rockets thrown by the frigate at intervals. The appearance of the Polonais, when cleared for action, was a novelty to me—the bulk heads being removed, there was an unobstructed view of this fine ship's deck from stem to stern. The men were necessarily kept at quarters during the night, and we remarked there was far less noise among them than on any previous.

On the morning of the 28th, it was apparent the course had been altered during the night. The Polonais and Courageaux were under easy sail, a short distance from each other, with

* Why, on board a ship manned with near eight hundred men, a few English sailors were thus manacled, the officers of the Polonais, though frequently asked, never condescended to inform us.

no other vessel in view. The unfortunate sailors were now released from their irons; the bulk heads were replaced, and the lower deck guns housed; there being no immediate danger from a British fleet, the men were dismissed from their quarters.

An application was now made to the captain to have the luggage restored, as had been promised at the time of our capture; little or none, as before stated, had been brought on board the Polonais. He replied, that the sudden appearance of the two English vessels on the former day had prevented the removal of the greater part of the cargo, as well as the luggage from our vessel.

It is difficult to convey an adequate idea of the hardship of our situation in consequence of this loss, several being without any other article of apparel than those they were actually wearing. A trunk of boots and shoes (of which there were several on board the Scorpion) had been removed to the Polonais, and the French officers were now seen fitting each other with them. The request that a part might be allotted to our use met with a direct refusal. There were like-

wise three trunks (one belonging to myself) afterwards found on board this ship, at the opening of which the captain and mate of our vessel and myself were summoned to attend. This was done in the presence of the commander and his first lieutenant, designated le capitaine de frigate, they were found to contain only porter and wine; these had been taken from the lockers of the cabin; not an article of wearing apparel was found in them. This discovery appeared to surprise the officers I have mentioned. They assured us a careful search should be made, and that there was no doubt the original contents of these trunks would be recovered in a few hours. Astonished to find such a robbery committed by the crew of a French man of war, the captain was told, through an interpreter, that if the stolen articles were not recovered, or compensation made, on reaching a French port, an application for redress would be sent to the government, and if unsuccessful, no pains would be spared to give every publicity to the disgraceful transaction. Notwithstanding the assurance of the captain, only

a few articles of linen were recovered, and these (we were secretly told by a warrant officer) were taken by two midshipmen who had been stationed on board the Scorpion to superintend the removal of the cargo.

As some set off against this disappointment, six bottles of porter and six of wine were sent to us, by order of the first lieutenant. At sun set, the islands of Guernsey and Jersey were a short distance to leeward. A British sloop of war, persumed to be on the station, was seen to pass almost within hail of the Courageaux. The daring of her commander surprised the French officers exceedingly; and the commodore letting her pass under his guns, and withholding his fire, could only be accounted for, by supposing him fearful of alarming the coast, and attracting the attention of any British squadron that might be near.* On making the coast of France, early on the morning of the 29th May, the joy of the

* So certain were these officers that the sloop of war would be taken, that the fourth lieutenant, who spoke English, said to me, "You will have fresh companions on board here, in half an hour."

officers and men of the ship on board of which we unfortunately were, (now beyond the reach of a British fleet) was undescribable.* The weather was beautiful. The Courageaux and Polonais were fast approaching the harbour of Cherbourg, a few cables' length from each other, under all canvass, close hauled on the larboard tack. Now they ventured to display the tricoloured flag, and the broad pendant of the commodore floated at the mast head of the Courageaux. The telegraph, above the town, was seen to work with rapidity. As we approached the batteries, several boats with officers came off and hailed, as it was presumed, to welcome this (and, probably, it may not be saying too much to assert unexpected) safe return.†

* The mode adopted to show their joy on this happy occasion, was, not by the shake of the hand, but in kissing on the cheek, hugging and embracing, &c.—practices novel to us, as modes of salutation amongst men; and, certainly, anything but agreeable to witness.

† We were told, that the principal naval officer at Cherbourg, took the Polonais and Courageaux to be English line of battle ships, for some time after they came in sight. He fancied they had contrived, (which our ships occasionally did) to get hold of the French signals, more closely to reconnoitre the port.

At two, p. m. we were safely moored in the roadstead. Soon afterwards visits were paid to both vessels by officers attached to the service of the marine, of the garrison and the forts. For several days numerous boats were to be seen rowing round the ships: amongst the spectators were several well dressed persons, belonging to the higher class; likewise some females. None of them, however, came on board. The liberty we had enjoyed when at sea of ranging through the ship, with the exception of the quarter-deck and poop, was now withdrawn, and the captain ordered we should not pass the lower deck.

To this was added the annoyance of being confined at 6 p.m. to the lower hold. It will be believed that we longed for a removal from the Polonais. The welcome order did not arrive until the 9th June, when we were told to prepare for landing on the following day. This was merely exchanging a prison afloat for one on shore, but it delivered us from that gloomy lower hold, and caused a separation from the filthy set by whom it was tenanted. Certain we were

that whatever might be the fate awaiting us on the French shore, there was nothing to regret in quitting such an abode, as well as the officers and the ruffianly crew of this vessel. On the following day fresh water and provisions were served out, but not more of the latter than the sea allowance had been. The very day of our arrival at Cherbourg a British fleet appeared off the port, * nor did one afterwards occur during our stay there without a similar visit. Before taking leave of this ship, I shall offer a few general remarks and particulars respecting her, gleaned from my own observation, and details furnished by a warrant officer. The Courageaux, Polonais, and Hautpault of the line, with two frigates armed enflute, had sailed from L'Orient about four months previously for the West Indies. A few vessels were captured by them on the outward passage, the crews of which were put on board neutral ships, afterwards fallen in with. On arriving at the saints they were block-

* It was easy to perceive the French officers did not like the spectacle. The only view we could occasionally get of them, was through the lower deck ports.

aded by a British fleet, stated to be under the orders of Sir Alexander Cochrane. After remaining there about six weeks, the three line of battle ships succeeded in getting to sea. They were not long in having to encounter the squadron which had blockaded them. Owing to some occurence (which I never heard clearly explained) the Hautpault separated, and of the fate of that vessel, up to the present moment, they were ignorant. She was frequently the subject of conversation with the officers of the Polonais. Their first inquiry, on arriving at Cherbourg, was of her, and greatly were they chagrined on ascertaining there was no account of her arrival in France, they naturally feared she had been captured.* The Polonais and Courageaux made the best of their way for any French port they might have the good fortune to enter. They first attempted to get into Brest, off which place, my informant stated, they had a narrow escape from the English blockading fleet. On another

* The Hautpault was fallen in with by H.M. ship Pompee, Captain Faié, and captured after a severe action. She is now the Abercrombie.

occasion they were partially brought to action, but a thick fog coming on, aided by the approach of night, they were enabled to alter their course unperceived. These, and their superiority in sailing, had saved them in both instances.*

The Polonais was a new ship, (scarcely five months off the stocks,) though rated 74, she mounted a greater number of guns, and had on quitting France a complement of somewhat near 800 men, but which were considerably reduced previous to her arrival at Cherbourg. Indeed we were told, that had she been brought to action on the homeward voyage, not more than 500 men could have been brought to quarters, the diseases of a West India climate having thinned the crew, and left numbers in the hospital. Her weight of

* During my captivity I met with two officers who were on board the Gibralter, 98, one of the squadron so near capturing the Courageaux and Polonais. One of these was Lord Boyle, son of the Earl of Glasgow. From them I learned these Frenchmen were saved from capture by the occurrences I have mentioned, as the headmost ship of our squadron had got within gun shot of the French commodore when thick weather came suddenly on. His Lordship (a midshipman) was taken with a boat's crew in attempting to cut out a vessel from under some batteries on the French coast.

metal was, on the lower deck 44 pounders, the main do. 32, on the quarter deck and forecastle 42 pound carronades, with long guns immediately forward. Of the crew, the greater part were of the marine artillery, fine looking young men. At sea, their appearance having the uniform covered with canvass frocks, and caps of the same material, was most unsightly, especially as the razor seemed to have been unanimously voted superfluous from the moment they had quitted France.

The officers, except a few of the midshipmen, could not boast of either naval or gentlemanly manners or appearance. The men were punished for neglect of duty or other offences summarily, by being struck upon the spot with with whatever the offended officer deemed the best weapon of chastisement, at hand—often in a brutal manner; and a severe kicking was the resource, when nothing better suited his angry haste. They were frequently to be seen placed in irons, between two of the guns on the lower deck, and kept there for hours on short allowance. It was represented to us that, of the entire crew there

were not more than fifty men capable of taking the wheel, and several of these were dutch seamen, who had been drawn from the fleet in the Texel. Our natural desire to profit by the first opportunity of seeing the internal economy of a French ship of the line, to endeavour to trace where the immense superiority of the navy of England lay, was in a great measure frustrated, by the strict watch kept over the prisoners. Opportunities were rarely offered of conversing with the officers, (there were few who spoke English) and when these did occur, they were careful to give little or no information; nevertheless, there was quite sufficient to be seen on board the Polonais, to convince us that the navy of France would never become the rival of our own.* The object these

* Since the peace of 1814, I have had an opportunity of visiting a French man of war. She was of much less size than the Polonais. The difference between them was great, both as to the cleanliness of the ship and general appearance of the men. It was clearly to be seen that our neighbours had left nothing undone to improve their marine since the peace. I have, moreover, learned from those who have had an opportunity of inspecting the squadrons at Toulon and at Brest, that finer ships, or apparently better appointed crews, cannot be met with.

vessels had in view, and it was so stated, in running up St. George's Channel, where we were so unfortunate as to be captured by them, was, to avoid the British squadrons cruizing off the coast of France; by falling in with vessels, provision laden, off the Irish land, and thus obtaining stores, they would be able to keep at sea for some time longer, till a favourable chance of slipping into a French port, might offer. The hour for leaving the Polonais at length arrived: after inspection on the quarter-deck, we were ordered to descend into the boats. This being the last opportunity of formally complaining to the captain and officers, of the manner in which we had been robbed, and otherwise ill used, it was not overlooked. They were told that we considered our situation could not have been more unfortunate, had we been captured by a paltry privateer. To them, as crews of national ships, it was a disgrace. The reply, and which the captain made (accompanied by a shrug of the shoulders) was, "I cannot help it, it is, you know, the fortune of war." Our guard in the boats to the shore looked far

better in their uniform, than in the frocks and caps which we had been accustomed to behold them when at sea. Many of the inhabitants of Cherbourg came to witness the landing. The English fleet were to be seen at no great distance from the outer forts. It may be considered, this view of our ships caused us many a painful recollection, nor did it appear to add materially to the gratification of those in whose power we were. On reaching the mole head, a company of soldiers were waiting, as the escort, and we were led between files, exposed to the gaze of the populace, to the Bureau de Marine,* apparently by a circuitous route. The general appearance of these spectators, save the military, was not calculated to remind us of the fact so strenuously and continually repeated in the French papers, viz.—that they were living under

* Immediately on getting out of the boats, several Douanniers (custom-house officers) approached to search what little luggage had been saved. Such was the minuteness with which this was done that, from one of our sailors they took a small parcel, containing little more than a pound of brown sugar; and, from several others, tobacco, to them the greatest of luxuries—the quantity of which did not exceed a few ounces.

the happiest of Governments. The women, who were in far greater number than the men, were certainly not of engaging appearance. The greater part of those we saw were of the lower order; their dress (wholly singular to us in its fashion) was of the coarsest materials. Nearly all the males who came to gaze at us, were very old, or mere boys, and their clothes corresponded in quality with those of the women. The appearance of the town bespoke a want of trade. There was no sign of the bustle and activity which generally impress the traveller with the prosperity of our seaport towns. The docks and basin contained merely a few privateers, and a store ship fitting out; with some dismantled vessels, which had been captured at different periods of the war, and could not be sent to sea for fear of again falling into the hands of the English; moreover, there were very few colonies which had not been wrested from France at this period

On arriving at the Bureau de Marine, we were separately examined. Our ages, professions, places of birth, names of parents, &c. &c. were

recorded, and we understood, for the purpose of being returned to the transport board; and our heights having been measured, we were led by the same guard to the town prison, an old stone building, to the left, on entering the port. It appeared that the room allotted to us had, at different times, received our countrymen. There were many pithy remarks upon the walls, reflecting upon the character of the gaoler. It was a painful occupation to read those statements, but amusing, as regards the trouble some had taken to give an account of their capture. One poor fellow, from Scotland, taken in 1805, lamented having left his large family at Arbroath; while others had left minute details of themselves, almost carrying their biographies back to their birth and parentage.

The only furniture in this room was the guard bed, raised about three feet from the ground, on which straw was thrown. Light was admitted through the windows, strongly barred with iron, and the bayonet of the sentry seen through these, shewed the danger of an attempt at escaping in that quarter. In this gloomy abode we were

detained seven days, and our anxiety to learn our final destination became considerable. At length it was announced that on the 17th June we were to march for the newly established depôt at Cambrai.

During the confinement here, a written statement of the robbery of our luggage on board the Polonais, with a prayer for redress, was sent to the commissary of marine. Whether, owing to the forcible though just terms of this memorial, or the readiness to grant justice, I will not determine, but some attempt at redress certainly followed. It was not long before the first lieutenants of the Polonais and Courageaux visited us in this new residence, saying they came by orders of the commodore, to know at what we valued the wearing apparel which had been purloined from the captain, mate, and myself. Separate statements were to be made. When these, however, were prepared, they refused to accept them, objecting, that part of the luggage had gone down with our vessel, as had the greater part of the cargo, owing to the sudden appearance of the English cruizers. Desiring

amended lists to be made by the following day, they departed. On their return those lists were placed before them. Without attempting to dispute the value which had been affixed to each article, they urged the hardship of making the officers of these ships pay for the acts of the men. After a good deal of argument, as to our right of remuneration, the offer was made of 150 francs (about £7 sterling) to each, and we were told if this proposal was not accepted, "we might do what we liked."

We had previously received a visit from the American vice consul, to whom we communicated all that had happened regarding our treatment since being captured. His advice was—"Take whatever you can get." This was acted upon, by accepting the offer I have named. The object of the vice consul's first visit was to bring some linen belonging to me, which had been delivered to an American gentleman, who had been robbed in a similar manner by the crew of the Courageaux. These ships had fallen in with an American vessel with passengers, on their homeward voyage, and destroyed her, to avoid information being

given to any British men of war. It is scarcely to be credited, that the persons and property of the subjects of a friendly power (for such was America to France at that time) should have been thus infamously treated. I have often regretted at not having had an opportunity of personally thanking the gentleman referred to, for his kind feeling in sending these articles to me, and more particularly as I was in captivity with little means of replacing them, and he then at liberty to return to his home.

CHAPTER II.

MARCH TO CAMBRAI——OCCURRENCES ON THE ROAD——OBSERVATIONS ON THE APPEARANCE OF THE COUNTRY AND OF THE INHABITANTS——ARRIVAL AT CAMBRAI, RESIDENCE THERE, &c.

At ten o'clock in the morning of the day fixed for our departure, we left under the escort of five Gens d'armes. A last look of the sea, was taken with feelings of sorrow.* The morning was beautifully fine, and on arriving at the summit of a hill overlooking the town, we could perceive the English squadron, just beyond range of the batteries, proudly keeping watch over their enemies in the roadstead of Cherbourg. It is hardly necessary to give a detailed journal of each day's occurrences, from leaving that place, till our

* Some of the party died during this captivity.

finally reaching Cambrai, on the 27th July. I shall, in preference, select a few facts, developing the system of the French government, in conducting prisoners from the coast to their depôts; even now, probably, hardly well known in England—though never to be forgotten by those who had the misfortune to suffer from its severity. Gens d'armes were invariably used in the escort of prisoners of war. They were the finest troops then in France, being picked men, from soldiers who had long served, and who had seen three campaigns. *The Gens d'armes à Cheval* were said to amount to forty thousand; and those *à pied* to about thirty thousand men.* From these corps one was selected, *the élite*, which, being attached to the *Grande armée* during its campaigns, served as a military police in the conquered towns and provinces; and for the arrest of deserters. The powers of one of these *Gens d'armes* seemed to exceed even those of the

* Since the peace of 1814, and more particularly of later years, this force has been considerably reduced. By recent returns, there appear to be no more than 622 officers and 15,277 subalterns of horse and foot.

police officer. To him was given authority to demand any traveller's passport, and to search at all times, suspected persons. A blow from a prisoner at one of these men, was punishable with death. Each Gen d'arme in conducting prisoners was answerable for his charge. "*Corps pour Corps.*" Hence, while conducted by these men, (whose ferocity of manner might result, rather from the marauding life to which they had been accustomed than actual personal hatred of Englishmen,) an unremitting watch was kept on our proceedings. They seemed scarcely less obnoxious to the inhabitants of the country we passed through.*

* These men being stationed on the roads, invested with the arbitrary powers above described, held (especially in the smaller villages) a rod of terror over the inhabitants. To the unfortunate conscript who deserted when ordered to join his regiment, nothing could be more formidable than one of them. The arrogance and severity of this class during the reign of Napoleon can scarcely be imagined. Though the restoration of the Bourbons lessoned their power, it did not immediately reduce them to a level with the other troops. They were the last seen to mount the white cockade. Even at a later period, the revolution of July 1830, they were so much detested by the population that whenever they fell into the power of the defenders of the barricades, during the three days, they were speedily shot.

Our route lay through Caen, Valognes, Caranton, Bayeaux, Breteville, Lisieux, Berney, Brionne, Rouen, Luboissiere, Nieufchatel, Aumale, Poicy, Amiens, and Baupaume to Cambrai. Between these towns, the nights were sometimes passed in villages, when the former day's march had been too long to enable us to reach another town before nightfall. The weather, with the exception of two day's, was extremely fine during the entire march, though warm enough to make a knapsack a heavy burthen to those who were not used to it. A seafaring life generally unfits men for being good pedestrians, and our seamen soon began to suffer from blistered feet. At Amiens some were unable to proceed on foot. Of all the prisons in which we had to sojourn on the road, none was found so bad as the one of this town. The gaoler (formerly a Gen d'arme,) had in his custody three of that corps, who had been imprisoned, owing to some Englishmen having escaped from them. He appeared to enjoy a kind of revenge in making our confinement as severe as possible. For this purpose, and to enable him to extort

money, he refused beds to all who would not pay for them at the rate of five francs per night. In the evening the whole party were made to descend, by the glare of a lanthorn, down a long flight of steps, to a vaulted cellar, into which no light came, save from a small opening near the roof, upon a level with the pavement of the court yard. It is impossible to give an adequate idea of the wretchedness of this place. Such were the damp and stench, that, though thoroughly wearied on arriving with a long day's march, we could obtain no rest. When brought into the court yard the following morning, two of the seamen swooned away. None of the inmates of that prison seemed to be dealt with as we were. It may be imagined on our first descending into this hole what our feelings were, on being told, by this ruffianly gaoler, that our stay was intended to be for four days and nights. We could anticipate no other result, than the removal of every one to the military hospital of the town. Finding all attempts to prevail upon our keeper to change the place of confinement fruitless,

money was offered at the rate he had before asked for beds. This resource proving unavailing, means were found to send a statement, written in pencil, (pen and ink being refused,) to the commissary of war. Without loss of time his secretary visited us, to ascertain the justice of our complaints; now the gaoler was all humility. The result of this interference was our removal to a large and dry room, on the first story, looking into the prison yard, and where we lodged during the remainder of this stay at Amiens. Notwithstanding the welcome change, the effect of that one dreary night fell heavily upon several of the party. Three sailors being unable to continue the march, were removed to the military hospital, where one of them afterwards died.

The general state of the prisons in which we lodged during the journey, gave no evidence of any attention being paid to the condition of the goals in France. It might rather be presumed, that the government designedly made these abodes as wretched as possible to their inmates; thus rendering them more terrible to

civil and military delinquents. In most of the larger towns, the numbers confined were very considerable. Misery is said to bring together strange bed-fellows; and our experience showed every variety of specimen, from the imprisoned count, to the convict doomed to labour for life at the public works. At Rouen, by far the largest prison we saw upon the route, were confined several branches of ancient noble houses, for political offences, or being suspected of hostile feelings to the government: as well as hordes of conscripts, and soldiers who had deserted from their regiments. Here, appeared to be a classification which we had not before seen. The state prisoners being separated from the military offenders, and the latter from those condemned for civil offences. The behaviour of the unfortunate French prisoners, with whom we travelled at different times, was generally civil, and we could not help pitying them. Many appeared to envy our lot, and were grateful for any little kindness shown to them, such as handing over our allowance of provisions, which we did not always consume, when better could be purchased.

On leaving Lisieux, an occurrence took place, which occasioned a severity of treatment we had not anticipated. On that day, rather more liberty was allowed of walking some hundred yards in advance of a body of French deserters, chained together, who were the special objects of the vigilance of our conductors. On mounting a small eminence, our escort being a few hundred yards behind, three of the sailors disappeared in a corn-field by the road side, and there lay concealed. The gens d'armes did not discover this escape, until the deficiency of number was found on reaching the village where we had to pass the night. Their anger was extreme; and those who remained, suffered for the absent, being placed for the night in a cold vaulted cellar. * On commencing the journey the following morning we were handcuffed, and fastened to the same cord as the deserters above noticed. The gens d'armes had an indisputable right to treat us in this manner, as I have before stated they were personally responsible for our safe conveyance; and, severe

*After many vain attempts to obtain a boat on the coast, these men were taken, and in about six weeks afterwards joined us at Cambrai.

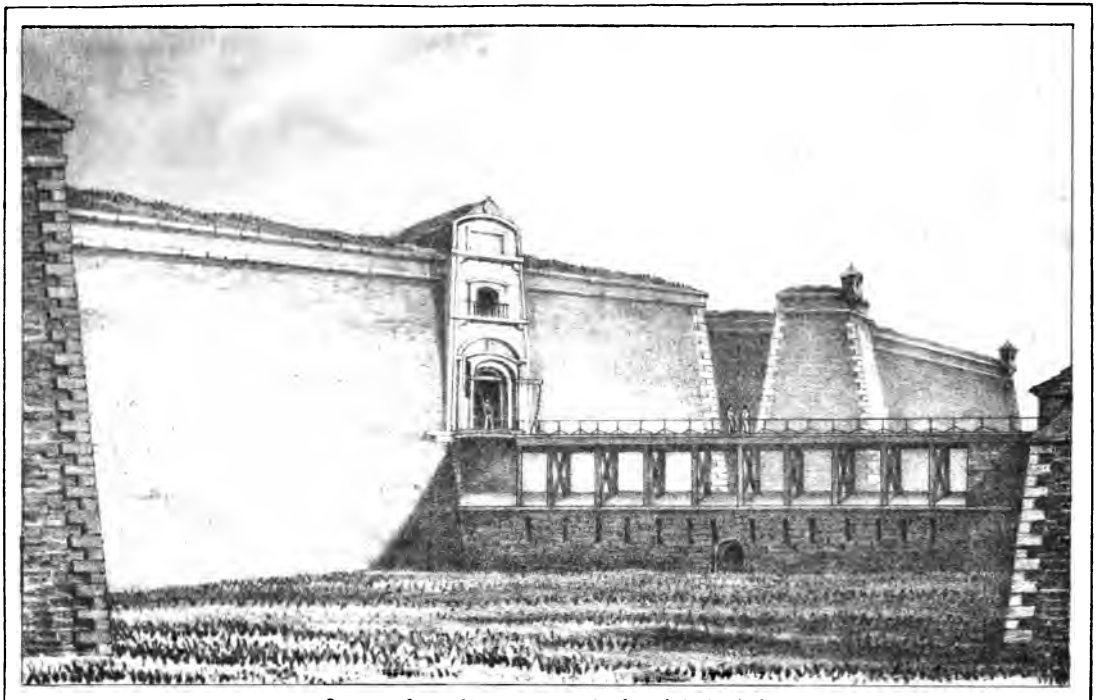
as this precaution might be, it was allowed by the government at that period. We now considered an arrival at Cambrai almost as great a deliverance as a return to England, and longed with an intensity, which can hardly be expressed, to be free to walk without the weight of degrading fetters, and to rest untormented by filth and vermin, which rendered all the prisons we had lodged in noisome to an extent almost unindurable.

On the morning of the 26th June, the doors of the gaol at Baupaume were opened for our departure; this was the last stage to Cambrai, and contrary to anticipation, the handcuffs were no longer used—at 2 p.m. we entered that town, which appeared a considerable place; and were conducted to the citadel, on reaching which we were immediately surrounded by the English prisoners of the depôt, many inquiries touching our capture, &c. had to be answered. We were struck by the first view of so many English as were now seen, (more than 1000 being confined here) generally clothed in grey jackets and trowsers, with straw hats. On being conducted before the officer in command, we underwent an exami-

nation, for the purpose of a minute description being taken similar to that already noticed at Cherbourg, and then we were allotted rooms in the barracks.

The commandant, entering his bureau, addressing himself to me, inquired whether I belonged to either of the services. On my replying in the negative he said, that as a *passager negociant* I should be admitted to parole as soon as he had seen whether my conduct deserved his recommendation to the minister to obtain the indulgence. I was then conducted to a room on the ground floor, occupied by the officers of the depôt in which to remain, with fifteen others, until the permission referred to was granted.

Before commencing any description of Cambrai or its citadel, I shall give, as they occur to me, a few general remarks on the state of the country through which we had passed, gleaned during the march. I availed myself more eagerly of this opportunity of making observations, because, as will doubtless be remembered, with the exception of the short interval afforded by the peace of Amiens, the English generally possessed no means



Drawn on Stone by W. Crane, from a Sketch made by the Author.

ENTRANCE TO THE CITADEL OF CAMBRAI.

PUBLIC LIBRARY
ASTOR, LENOX
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

of personally ascertaining the condition of France, during the non-intercourse attending the last war, viz. from the period of 1803 to that of 1814.

With some exceptions, the general appearance of the country did not strike those accustomed to England, as being in a high state of cultivation. For several days' march after leaving Cherbourg, the soil seemed miserably poor, and the total want of such neat farm houses as are to be seen along most lines of road in our own country, struck us forcibly. In the course of the following days, however, farm dwellings were more frequently to be met with. The field labourers noticed were principally women. The implements of husbandry, especially the plough, were of the rudest construction, guided by aged men, who were sometimes seen amongst the women tilling the land. The horses employed upon the farms were small and poor. Approaching Berney, the land was of better quality, as was the greatest part of Normandy. In the vicinity of Rouen there were several beautiful tracts of country. The banks of the Seine, now covered with verdure, could scarcely be surpassed for love-

liness and fertility. Here we saw, growing in the same field, flax, barley, wheat, and other varieties of grain, sown in stripes or patches, which being now in full bloom, presented a variegated mass of colour, the effect of which was really beautiful. Along several parts of the road through Normandy, there were as fine fields of wheat as we ever remembered having seen in England: there the ground appeared well tilled—the houses and gardens were little, if any, inferior to our own. The horses moreover surpassed any we had hitherto met with; though small, they were in good condition, and generally what breeders term entire horses. Nothing in the dress or appearance of the peasantry, except on Sunday, bore out the idea we had formed from previous report of the gaiety of the French people, their love of finery, &c. Few young men were seen not in uniform; the old and few youths wearing plain clothes, seemed to think a cocked hat, with a tricoloured cockade, an indispensable appendage, though even wearing wooden shoes, which encumbered the feet of the greatest part of the peasantry. To this rule

waggoners and butchers seemed an allowed exception; they wore a cotton night cap, under which hung a large queque, well plaited on each side with a profusion of powder, or perhaps flour, as a substitute. The reader will imagine the *man mountain*, whose summit was thus ornamentally capped, to be wrapped in a blue smock frock, somewhat like those worn by carriers in Yorkshire and other parts of England. Trains of waggons were frequently met with under the care of men thus habited; these convoys our sailors christened "*Boney's Merchantmen.*" The miserable sight of a troop of unfortunate beings driven along the roads, loaded with chains, was gazed upon weekly or oftener by the country people with an unpitying apathy, which could only be accounted for by their having become quite familiarized with such mournful spectacles. The trains thus continually passing along the roads, from gaol to gaol, were either deserters from detachments of conscripts, on their way to depôts where were the head quarters of their regiments, or soldiers who had returned to their families without leave.

The commandant at this time of the English prisoners at Cambrai, the Baron de Dalmont, officer of the legion of honor, and colonel of gens d'armes, though considered a severe man, was nevertheless disposed, as far as his duty allowed, to protect the unfortunate men under his charge from the brutality which the French military were often too apt to exercise towards them. He would punish the gens d'armes for striking a prisoner, as he would the latter for riot and drunkenness, by long confinement, occasionally with no food but bread and water. It may be imagined the charge of more than 1000 British seamen was one of some difficulty and responsibility, requiring temper and firmness, which the Baron certainly possessed, and which were indeed often severely tested. The task of getting the sailors into the rooms where they were to be locked up for the night was frequently no easy one. More than the number allotted were often to be found in one room, and while the gens d'armes were busied removing the excess to their proper abodes, the sailors would crowd in the same manner into any other chamber than

their own. In consequence the gens d'armes were often long and wearily occupied running up and down the passages, chasing the sailors (who enjoyed giving Mounseer the slip) into their respective quarters for the night. Had not the commandant set the example of temper, and enforced its obedience, as I have just remarked, the prisoners might have suffered very brutal treatment in return for these frolics.

In the depôt were a considerable number of soldiers who had been taken in Spain, the greater part in the memorable retreat of Sir John Moore, many of whom had been brought up to handicraft trades in England. These the Baron permitted to follow their several callings in town, requiring them to return to the citadel every evening before the muster. It never occurred, at least as far as I could learn that one of them abused in a single instance the liberty thus granted. So far was the commandant disposed to lessen the weight of captivity, that at one time those amongst the sailors whose conduct appeared to merit the indulgence, were allowed to visit the town, under pretext of endeavoring to find work, or to make purchases—

Unfortunately they but too often returned in a state of intoxication, though, like the soldiers, they never attempted to escape from the town on those occasions. During one of these visits, a message was brought to the citadel that three sailors had got into a scuffle with the town's people, and a guard was accordingly sent for them. Getting, probably not by accident, into what they termed a *grogshop* they had begun to deliver their minds pretty freely concerning *Boney*, who was anything but a favourite with them, this gave great offence to several of the inhabitants who were there, a row was the consequence, in which the Frenchmen were said to have been quite sufficiently beaten.* Immediately on the appearance

* It has often amused me to witness the lower class of the French engage in a pugilistic encounter. The parties looking at each other a few seconds, making the most ludicrous faces, attack in the fiercest manner, each advancing to get hold of the hair of his adversary, and at the same time endeavouring to bring him to the ground. The treatment of the fallen man is such as would not be allowed probably in Kentucky; he is kicked and beaten in the most abominable manner it is possible to conceive. The sailors, at Cambria, frequently fought, and as they termed it man of war fashion, i. e. the parties were placed opposite to each other, sitting on sea chests, to which their trowsers were nailed. The custom

of the guard, the sailors walked quietly back with them arm in arm to the citadel. The Baron de Dalmont however much he might admire the prowess of these men, who had beaten three or four times the number of his countrymen, was was compelled to discontinue the permission of visiting the town, and sentenced these pugnacious sailors to a week's confinement in a small room over the citadel gate, with no better fare than soup maigre, and brown bread, moreover depriving them of tobacco. This was the heaviest item of punishment, as it is the second necessary of life to a sailor, without it, even the prime essential grog is but half enjoyed.*

After a residence of about a fortnight at Cambrai, my petition to the minister of war, praying

observed on these occasions was, that no blow was fair if given above the breast. I have seen the sailors beat each other for even an hour thus placed, until one was heard to say, I give in, or "I've enough."

* The tobacco generally used in France at this period was of the most inferior kind, and grown in the country. The sailors said, they would just as soon chew as much burnt hay. I remember that my fellow prisoners, the sailors, seldom threw away a quid, bad as it might be. Whenever "Jack" was about to eat or drink, he carefully placed the ejected quid in his jacket pocket.

to be admitted to parole in the town was forwarded, and his excellency was pleased to grant its prayer. I cannot take leave of the citadel without adverting to the many kindnesses which I had received during my short stay there. Daily visits from friends resident in the town, materially lessened the irksomeness of the confinement.

Cambrai appeared to me a large clean and tolerably well-built town. At this period I believe the population was about 12,000. The English residing on parole somewhat exceeded 200, composed of officers of the navy, and a few of the army; the greater part were captains and mates of merchantmen, and passengers who had been taken at sea, with a few detenues. The Grande Place, a fine square, has the Maison de Ville in front, a large handsome stone building, containing the offices, as well as residences of the principal local authorities. The reader is probably aware that this town is celebrated for the manufacture of cambric and lace, which trades, at this period, were said to be in a very languishing state. The name of their immortal Archbishop Fenelon, is never mentioned but with veneration

by the inhabitants. As a fortress for strength and extent, the works of Cambrai are scarcely to be exceeded by any in the Netherlands; and these are crowned by the citadel, which commands all the outworks as well as the town.

The churches were numerous, and contain many good pictures. There was likewise a neat theatre, and a museum with many curiosities well worth a stranger's inspection. The surrounding country is generally flat, and the ground poor. With the exception of the Fauxbourgs immediately under the ramparts of the town, few houses are to be seen in the neighbourhood; save on the Sunday, when *Guinguettes* were held in the Fauxbourgs, there was little beyond the walls of the town tempting the curiosity of the prisoners. At these Sunday balls the dance was usually kept up till nine in the evening: no introduction was needed to a partner, as the French women seemed to have no violent aversion to dancing with the English. The music mostly consisted of two violins, with sometimes a tambourine, for which each cavalier was required to pay two sous per dance. We found the inhabitants generally

obliging and civil, though they did not show much disposition to become well acquainted with us; during this parole, with all the liberty of motion enjoyed by the inhabitants, we found time passed heavily.*

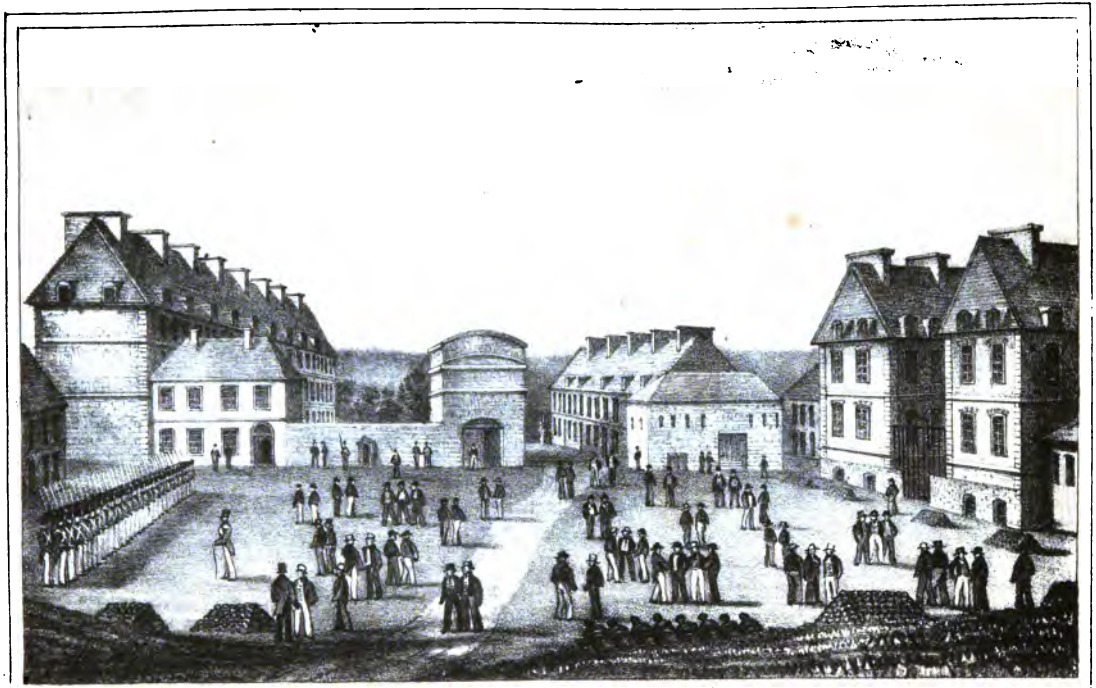
This residence in town was of short duration; a few weeks afterwards the ill-fated expedition appeared off Flushing. At this time Arras, Valenciennes, and Cambrai, the three depôts allotted for English prisoners, and only a short distance from each other, as well as from the coast, contained in all, it was presumed, not fewer than six to eight thousand of our countrymen. The alarm, at the appearance of so considerable an armament upon the coast, was great. All the troops (excepting those in Spain, or were then serving against the Austrians) were instantly

* The situation of a prisoner of war on parole, can only be conceived by those who have been placed in that position. Any thing is preferable to close confinement. Yet parole prevents advantage being taken of any favourable opportunity which may occur of effecting an escape. Three occasions offered during my residence in the town of Cambria of reaching England in a few days, by means of guides, and of which I could have taken advantage. Those who did, accomplished their object.

sent to cover Antwerp; the government feared a combined attempt on the part of so considerable a mass of prisoners to break out of their confinement and join the army of their countrymen. Shadowy as this cause of alarm may appear under the real circumstances of the case, no means were left unemployed to frustrate such attempt. The prisoners admitted to parole in the town of Cambrai, were now peremptorily ordered into the citadel, nor was permission granted of quitting it even with a guard for two months afterwards. I was allotted the same room as before, and my confinement was rendered more irksome by having to attend a muster every morning at six o'clock. With such rigour was this appearance enforced, that if any prisoner overcome by sleep delayed entering the ranks even for a few moments after the hour, he was punished by twenty-four hours confinement in the small room over the gate.

In the then crowded state of the depôt, it was no easy matter to dispose of time. The continual confusion and noise by which we were surrounded, rendered any mental occupation almost

impossible. The sailors and soldiers endeavoured to pass away their hours by a number of ludicrous sports and devices. Mock elections will immediately occur to every reader who remembers Hogarth's admirable picture. The post of captains of the room was the object of contest, and few points of a real election we probably omitted. Candidates might be seen haranguing the voters from the top of a barrel or the barrack windows. There were several blacks amongst the prisoners, and when one of these could be *persuaded to stand*, he was sure of hearty support; most of them having been cooks of vessels, were well able to superintend the preparation of the messes. When asked why black men are so frequently selected for stewards on board ships, Jack's answer generally was, "that they were regularly built for the birth, seeing as how the fire could not spoil their complexions." To return to our elections. The contests were often very severe, and the black men seldom appeared freely as candidates, for, if successful, they were sure of a rough handling when chaired round the citadel yard. The Baron de Dalmont would frequently



INTERIOR OF THE CITADEL OF CAMBRAY.

Taken from the Gate

look out on these scenes from the window of his bureau, evidently much amused, and he always returned, in the most gracious manner, the bows made by the chaired member as he passed under the window. Frequently the opposing parties came together in the route of the procession, when a promiscuous row commenced. The unlucky member was speedily shorn of his budding honors, and thrown from the boards whereon he had been carried, which the bearers hastily turned into weapons of attack and defence, careless how the poor fellow whom they had borne came to the ground. But he generally submitted to the changes of his fortune with much good temper, and unless too much stunned by the fall, was soon "hot hand in the fray," as the border people term it, fighting amongst the foremost of his retainers. Several of the soldiers played on instruments of various sizes, and powers of annoyance; all kinds of music from the fife to the fiddle enlivened the processions. When the chaired member was a black, the sailors always dressed him in the most ludicrous manner. He would often have, for example, his face tatooed with

pipe clay, and wear a soldier's coat and a cocked hat of brown paper, flourishing a broom in his hand. Unless previously well primed with grog, the black men did not cordially relish figuring thus conspicuously attired, to the great amusement of all the sentries whom they passed in their progress round the citadel yard.

Another resource obviously adapted to the circumstances of our confinement, was amateur acting, which in the characters of performers and audience, provided for the amusement of a large number. The women's parts, for the want of dresses, were omitted; perhaps this was the reason why the performances generally went off with little spirit or applause, with the exception of the singing. The bills announcing the night's performance were written as "*clerk like*" as the penman's skill allowed, and posted on the barrack wall. They invariably concluded with the treat of the evening, "*lots of singing.*" The prices of admission were suited to the circumstances of all parties, not more than a few sous. God save the King, Rule Brittania, Hearts of Oak, &c. resounded on these occasions, from one wall of

the citadel to the other, and if time and tune were not always faultlessly kept, the deficiency was made up entirely to the satisfaction of most of the audience by loudness and emphasis. It seemed essential to the satisfactory conclusion of all these exhibitions, that like the elections, they should end in an entertainment not promised in the bills, viz. a fight. The character of the English sailor was on all these occasions prominently shewn. Cut off from friends and country, with no immediate hope of escaping from their rigorous confinement, the sailors lost little, if any, of their vivacity, and having vented their regrets, every now and then, in a few comprehensive and forcible complaints against fortune, they would bustle with eagerness about the trifles they made their business from day to day, and quarrel and make friends as heartily as if they had been enjoying a run at Portsmouth point. It must, however, be confessed, that the French prisoners in England shewed to greater advantage than the English in France, in points of ingenuity and industry; the neatness of many of their little manufactures will be well remem-

bered. But the English were deprived of any stimulus to labours of this kind, as they could not obtain prices for their wares to repay their trouble. Making straw hats, shoes, and clothing, principally for their own use, formed the extent of their occupations.

Our countrymen at home were not forgetful of those thus imprisoned in the enemies country. Collections were made, from which they received weekly allowances. It was most frequently upon the pay days that they indulged in the amusements I have mentioned. Spirits were unfortunately very cheap; in them and tobacco was consumed nearly the whole of the allowance, intended to have increased the prisoners more salutary comforts.* Often after a long fit of hard

* The allowance to the British prisoners by the French government at this period was,

Colonels and Post Captains.....	100	francs	per	month.
Majors and Commanders	75	"		"
Captains in the Army, and Lieuts. in the Navy	50	"		"
Lieutenants in the Army, Clergymen, and Pursers	37	"	10 sous	"
Midshipmen, Ensigns, Warrant-Officers, Passengers, and Masters and Mates of Merchantmen.....	29	"	13 "	"

drinking, the sailor would be seen repenting, and earnestly resolving "*to drink no more.*" During the keeping of this vow of temperance, his messmates left no argument untried to induce him to spend with them the allowance he was weekly saving. If the repeated arguments, "that he was a fool to hoard, as he did not know for whom—that drinking only water, he was sure to kick the bucket," failed of producing any effect, one of those occasions was never wanting, when it was supposed absolutely necessary "that he should treat his friends." An old shipmate would be found, some acquaintance, or a former neighbour made out with the last new comer, with various other excuses, (often,

Sailors and Soldiers—1 lb brown bread per day.
½ lb beef..... "
2 oz. ligueumes "
1½ sous ..... "
and 15 lb of straw every three months, with a mattrass and a blanket for two men. The seamen were allowed from contributions raised in England 1d ℔ day. In the course of the year, the captains, &c. of the merchant service received 20, sometimes 25 francs from these contributions. Captains, under tonnage, were allowed 7 francs ℔ month, as they did not receive the pay similar to those who had the charge of vessels of a larger class.

it must be confessed, not on the clearest grounds,) brought about these jovial meetings in which the sailors delighted. Many of the older hands were great adepts at claiming relationship, &c. By one means or other, they seldom failed, sooner or later, to entice a messmate, who had vowed temperance, in a new debauch, from which he rarely escaped until, as they phrased it, "he was regularly got into line, and had not a shot left in the locker." Action will produce re-action: increased intemperance was followed by vehement repentance, until a methodist society was formed, and those who regretted their evil doings, and the money they had spent, became contrite and religious. The Baron de Dalmont looked favourably upon this sudden change, and gave the congregation a room for their place of worship. Some of the preachers had evidently received a good education, and their ministry was successful for a time. Psalms and hymns were now and then heard in the yard of the citadel, though not perchance so loud as the favourite songs in the amateur performances. For some time all

went on well, but at length a preacher was accused of being drunk, and he angrily denied the imputation, with a force of well selected language, which strangely failed in convincing his audience of his sobriety. Parties were formed, and apparently much to the comfort of all concerned, the matter ended in a general row. The sailors in the yard hearing these pleasant and unwonted sounds in the room (where, as they said, the Methodists were at work,) hurried up, eager for their share of the fray. "The combat thickened;" and, to them, in a very satisfactory manner: windows were soon demolished, and the preacher was handled in a manner anything but agreeable to him. All was going on merrily, when the commandant hearing the tumult, sent a body of gens d'armes to clear the room. Several of the most prominent in the affair were confined for twenty-four hours, in the room over the citadel gate, and during my stay at Cambrai, the Methodists could not again succeed in obtaining a room wherein to hold their meetings.

Not long after our parole had been withdrawn,

as I have before related, there appeared to be a chance of effecting an escape from the citadel. A round hole was discovered, the opening of which was evidently unsuspected, being covered by weeds and long grass; at least it was not guarded by a sentry. This aperture was regularly bricked, and termed a sally port. Naturally concluding that this passage must lead to the outer wall of the main rampart, measures were taken to explore its direction and extent. A midshipman volunteered the undertaking, and crawling on his hands and knees in the dark to the extent, as he supposed, of about 100 yards, his progress was stopped by a brick wall. On returning, and making this report, the result of the consultations thereon was a second *reconnaissance*. In this he was assisted by a friend. By means of a poker they succeeded in removing a brick from the wall at the extremity of the passage, and light appearing through the opening, shewed the *fossé* of the rampart. It did not seem more than a few yards to drop thence into the ditch. The brick was carefully replaced, and the discovery being communicated to a few, myself of the

number it was decided that an attempt should be made that night to quit the citadel, a short time before the last muster. The party was to be composed of twenty; if successful, a note would be left to apprise those remaining of the means by which the egress had been effected. An unexpected difficulty now occurred; we were not inmates of the same room; the invariable practice was, whenever a desertion took place, if only one person, those stationed in the same apartment were punished by a confinement still more severe. To obviate the unpleasantness of others being thus treated on our account, it was decided that the person who had made the discovery of the passage, and those quartered with him, should have the first chance of escaping by it, that the members of the room, in which I was, were to follow the next evening. Great was this disappointment to those who had to remain, and aggravated not a little on ascertaining that several, fortunate enough to be included in the first party, were observed to join with reluctance. They conceived there was great danger in scaling the ramparts, and moreover that it was almost impossible to reach the coast,

if even beyond the walls of the town. At five o'clock in the afternoon, our friends departed at intervals of ten minutes. There was not the least suspicion apparent, on the part of the gens d'armes and centries, of what was going forward. The hour of muster having arrived, and the room No. 2 of the barrack, found without occupants, the drums beat. The commandant, at first, appeared to doubt the report of this desertion. Coming quickly over to the barrack, he went through the different apartments, seeing the musters made in them, and inquiring when the absentees were last seen; the troops were soon called out, and patroles sent upon, and round the fossé, of the ramparts. A field piece, placed at the west wing of the citadel, was fired, as a signal to the country people that an escape had taken place. In the sally port, the party remained till twelve o'clock that night, fearful of stirring, as the voices of the patrole were frequently heard, while passing under the rampart, but a few yards below them. All appearing quiet, at twelve o'clock the bricks were removed, and without accident, they descended into the

fossé. A great mistake was made—some one should have been left in the passage, to replace the bricks, after their departure. There would have been no difficulty in remaining in that situation, till the hour at which the next attempt was to be made. Owing to this want of foresight, the means by which the escape had been effected, was observed the following morning, on the patrole making a tour of the fortifications; the bricks being found strewed in the ditch. The night was so dark that the steps leading to the second parallel could not be discovered till day light. This difficulty got over, there were yet several of the outworks to be passed. Surprising as it may appear, warning having been given by the report of the gun from the citadel, to the inhabitants, and country people, our friends, nevertheless, in open day, clearing all obstacles, finally attained the country. Never was attempt more unfortunate: the whole were retaken, and in a few days reconducted in handcuffs to the citadel. It was said, that the commandant, on ascertaining how the escape had been effected, ordered the bricks not to be

replaced, anticipating that a similar attempt would be made the following night. He placed sentries immediately under the sally port, and gave orders that the bayonet should be freely used on all who might reach the ditch. Whether there was any truth in this I know not. I can scarcely believe the Baron de Dalmont could have exhibited such a want of humanity; yet the information came from a brigadier to one of our party. Further attempts for a short time were necessarily deemed too hazardous.

For this offence the deserters, as they were termed, were placed in close confinement for several weeks, nor were any of them afterwards permitted to reside in the town, or even for a few hours to visit it, save under escort.

The object of the expedition to which I have referred having been attained by the capture of Flushing, and it appearing that no attempt would be made at a landing on the coast, parole was again granted to those who had, in consequence of the appearace of that armament, been deprived of it. During our confinement in the citadel, the peaceable demeanour of the inhabitants

towards the English seemed to have undergone a change, which could only be accounted for by the appearance of that expedition.

The national guard had been sent to the coast to reinforce the troops covering Antwerp; thus families were deprived of the society of their relatives, and occupations were neglected. These, added to the hardships they had to contend with, (and which were represented by letters to their relatives as most severe,) was to be attributed the change spoken of. It was reported that several of this bourgeois guard had fallen into the hands of the English in passing to the island of Cadsand, by whom they were very badly treated.

From the middle of October to 1st January, 1810, (when those residing in town were finally removed to other depôts) strong detachments of troops were seen to pass, and some few to remain at Cambrai. The Austrian campaign had terminated. This was the first opportunity I had of seeing any number of regular troops collected; they were generally fine looking men, well clothed and appointed, but not, however, to be

compared with many regiments I had seen in England, being much shorter in stature; their appearance was, nevertheless, warlike, being dark complexioned, and wearing mustachios. It was hard to reconcile the fact, that these troops had so often vanquished those of the northern powers, particularly the Prussians, whose infantry, it was proverbial, were the finest in Europe from the period of Frederick the Great. The fate of that kingdom was, nevertheless, decided in three days, in the first of which, the battle of Jena, the flower of the Prussian army was destroyed.

Part of the 50th regiment stationed here had a fine appearance. In November and December strong reinforcements arrived from Belgium, Holland, and the principalities of the Rhine, destined to reinforce the French armies at that time in Spain. They did not show any great disposition to enter that country, nor was it surprising. The French people had become heartily tired of the Peninsular war; their soldiers were seen returning in numbers maimed in battle, or suffering from the cruelties inflicted by the guerrillas. Many were the occasions in which

these men arrived lacerated and marked in a way revolting to humanity. Once taking a stroll through the Fauxbourg at the Mons gate, in company with a friend, we entered a cabaret, and met with an unfortunate French soldier who had returned from Spain, then on his way to his relatives, having received a discharge from the service. Finding we were English, he entered into conversation, and gave a long and interesting account of the hardships he had undergone, as well as the cruelties inflicted upon him, on two occasions particularly, when he fell into the hands of Spanish irregular troops. He said he had been frequently engaged with the English, "and longed to be made a prisoner by them," conceiving his situation could not be worse than that of the French soldier fighting in a country like Spain, where every individual was his bitterest enemy. Upon this unfortunate man taking off his cap, the word "Mina" was to be seen marked on his forehead; this he stated had been done in Andalusia by a party of guerrillas, in whose power he had fallen, and from which he had been released by the movement of a French corps sent

to scour that part of the country.* If the French were in many cases thus cruelly treated by the Spaniards, they were not less severe, when the tide of battle turned in their favour, on the English soldiers who surrendered to them. There were, as before stated, at that time in the citadel of Cambrai, a number of soldiers who had been taken on the retreat of Sir John Moore. One of these, a private of a Scotch regiment who had entered the town of Corunna after the embarkation of the army, was deprived of his ears; there were others also marked in a way equally horrible. At Caen, when on the march from Cherbourg, a visit was paid to us in the prison of that place by fourteen English women, the wives of soldiers taken at that period; several lost their husbands on that day. The sufferings of these females, allowing even one-half of their statements to be correct, are too horrible to relate. The French soldiers cut down the stragglers approaching

* I afterwards met at Chaallons, an Estaffette or Courier, who had been taken near Astorga, by some irregular Spanish troops. He was marked on the cheek in a way similar to the negroes occasionally seen on board vessels coming from Africa.

Corunna without mercy; and those who were too late to embark, having fallen lame on the march, and arriving, as they were seen, days after the British squadron had quitted the port, were more or less treated with the greatest brutality. The women paying this visit were then on their way to Morlaix, thence to embark for England.

The regiments passing Cambrai at the period of which I have spoken, were not accompanied by trains of waggons containing the baggage, or the wives and children of the soldiers, the usual attendants of a British regiment on march.

On the 23rd of December, an order unexpectedly arrived for the removal of the prisoners on parole, to the depôts of Verdun and Auxonne. Those of the navy and military, as likewise detenues and passengers were ordered to the former, and the captains and mates of merchantmen to the latter. Wishing to avoid a residence at Verdun, of which the accounts were not favourable, as regarded cheapness of living, situation, &c. Ten of us (denominated passengers, negociants) drew up a memorial to the government, praying to be allowed to remain in the

town of Cambrai, under whatever restriction the minister of war might impose. Frost had set in with great severity, there had been moreover a very heavy fall of snow. The distance to Auxonne exceeded considerably that of Verdun, the former in a contrary case, situated as it is, in one of the finest provinces of France, would have been repaired to without a murmur; the distance was computed at not less than 400 English miles. The inclemency of the season above all, made it very desirable to avoid such removal. In due course the minister of war's laconic reply was received, and to the effect "That the merchant passengers, *must* go to Auxonne, and if personally responsible for each other, may go without escort."

There was now no alternative than to prepare for the march. A Feuille de Route* for the

* Cambrai in 1815, a few days after the memorable battle of Waterloo, was taken by escalade, by a detachment of the brave troops who had been engaged in that action. The town was carried with inconsiderable loss. The garrison retiring to the citadel afterwards hoisted the white flag, on an officer being sent by Lewis XVIII, to receive their submission. It was for three years the head

ten persons thus described, was prepared, and delivered to one of the party, selected by the commandant. The particular line of road was defined, and a written order was attached for the payment of the travelling allowance of 2½ francs per day to each, which was to be presented to the commissaries of war, residing in the principal towns through which the journey had to be made. On the 10th January, 1810, after making our appearance before the commandant in the citadel, a farewell was taken of Cambrai. As

quarters of the illustrious Wellington, and the brave men, whom general Foy, in his narrative, thus describes, when speaking of the battle of Waterloo:

"Death was in their ranks, disgrace in their rear. In this terrible situation, neither the bullets of the Imperial guard, discharged almost point blank, nor the victorious cavalry of France, could make the least impression on the admirable English infantry; one might have thought it had rooted itself to the ground, but for the majestic movements which its battalions commenced some minutes after sun set. When the moment of the approach of the Prussian army, apprised Wellington that thanks to numbers, thanks to the force of inert resistance, and as a reward for having contrived to draw up brave fellows in battle, he had just achieved the most decisive victory of our age."

in the instance of the march from Cherbourg, I shall pass by any necessity which may appear of recording the occurrences of each day's march, from the commencement, till our arrival at Auxonne.

CHAPTER III

MARCH FROM CAMBRAI TO AUXONNE IN BURGUNDY—OCCURRENCES ON THE ROAD—RESIDENCE AT AUXONNE—ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE FROM THENCE.

THE route was by St. Quintin, Lafare, Leon, Cabeny, Rheims, Lesgrandes, Loges, Chalons-sur-Marne, Vittey-le-Francois, St. Dezier, Joinville, Vignery, Chaumont, Langres, Primthory, Dijon, to Auxonne. For the completion of this journey, twenty-four days were allowed; rest might be taken for a period of two or three days, at any of the towns above mentioned, provided the specified time of arrival was attended to. As the Feuille-de-route was for ten persons, we could not separate, by doing so we were liable to be stopped on the road by the police authorities, and kept in custody till the party in whose charge that document was

appeared. The roads were in many parts almost impassable; such had been the fall of snow, that the diligences and other conveyances could only move by the aid of additional horses. The shortness of the days at this period of the year, prevented our arrival at the towns marked in the Feuille-de-route, till sometime after dark. Billets on the inhabitants were to be obtained on application to the authorities; we rarely, however, sought them, but on the contrary, put up at the same inn, where after dinner the evening was spent in conversing upon the occurrences of the day. The inhabitants seemed greatly surprised to see ten Englishmen travelling on foot in such severe weather. An arrival each evening was sure to be attended with a visit from a gens d'arme or police officer. Sometimes the secretary of the mayor would come to make inquiries regarding us, and more particularly to inspect the Feuille-de-route or passport,* under which we were travelling. The landlords of the inns, invariably required to see that document,

*This is a printed form, in which the description of each person travelling by it is inserted.

when it was asked if we could be accommodated for the night.

The most remarkable town on our route, was Leon, situated on the summit of a high mountain, and in the centre of a plain. It can be discerned at the distance of many leagues. Rheims, the first resting place, had the appearance of a well built and rather handsome town. The cathedral is considered one of the finest in France, and her kings were usually crowned there.

Owing to the severity of the cold, we were more inclined to rest, than walk in search of objects worthy of attention during this short stay. Whether it was owing to the weather or otherwise, Rheims appeared at this time a very dull place. Here two of our party were taken ill, and being unable to prosecute the journey, were sent to the military hospital. Leaving this, and passing by the small village of Petites Loges, the spot was pointed out where the celebrated Sillery Champagne is produced. The ground being covered with snow, its quality could not be judged.

On arriving at Chaumont, an opportunity for

the first time offered, of witnessing an execution by the guillotine, an instrument which, it is not surprising, is regarded with horror, from the recollection of the thousands of human beings, during the period of the revolution who fell victims to it. To this feeling, must be attributed the small number of spectators on the occasion, which could not possibly exceed eighty to one hundred persons.

The culprit, who had been convicted of murder, was brought to the place of execution in a cart, attended by his confessor. Such was the emaciated state to which this miserable being was reduced, that he had to be supported to the scaffold, where the priest ascending, held before him an ivory crucifix; this he kissed, after which the priest speedily left the platform. From the period of the removal of this man from the cart, to his being buckled to the board, and the head severed from the body, a very few moments elapsed. Sawdust was strewed in quantities on, and around the scaffold. The guard was composed of a few gens d'armes The sight, although it passed so quickly, was

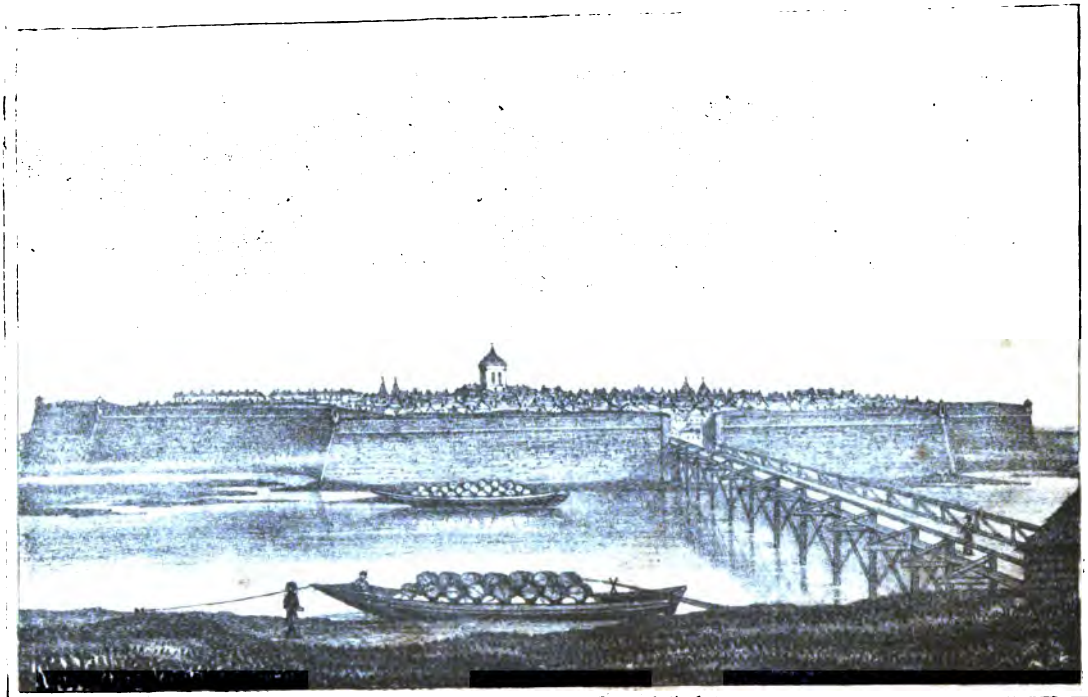
not calculated to create a desire to witness a repetition. The blood streamed freely through the boards of the platform, dropping into the sawdust placed underneath. The executioners, of which there were three, were respectably dressed in black. The principal one wore hair powder, with buckles at the knees and in the shoes. He had more the look of an advocate than an executioner.

At Chalons-sur-Marne, we were deprived of another companion, as was the case afterwards at St. Dezier, owing to severe attacks of ague which made refuge in the hospitals of those places unavoidable.

Now reduced to the number of six, previous to leaving that place, a covered cart was hired; slow as this conveyance was, it was found tolerably comfortable, and obviated the fatigue incident to marching on snow. Naturally anxious to arrive at Auxonne, the route was continued without further stoppage, except resting for the night, and we reached Dijon on the seventeenth day after our departure from Cambrai, now in one of the finest towns of France, as well as

one of the richest provinces, the expectation of having liberty to remain here, to expend the days making up the number allowed for the journey was disappointed. On applying to the commissary of war for that permission, it was not only refused, but also the payment of the marching money now due; soon afterwards, intimation was given, through the medium of a gen d'arme, sent by the general commanding, under whose authority the prisoners at Auxonne (now but one day's journey) were, that we must proceed to our depôt the following day. The motive for this arbitary proceeding could only be accounted for, by learning that a depôt of Spanish officers on parole, had been established in this place, and that as we were allies, it was necessary to prevent communication between us.

The first appearance of Auxonne is unfavourable, it is an inconsiderable town, on the left bank of the Saône, situated in a fertile country. The wines produced in the vicinity are celebrated for the richness of their flavour, the climate is considered equal to the most southern parts of France. At this time, however, there was nothing to recommend it: the frost continued as severe



Drawn [illegible] by W. Crane from a Sketch made by the Author

AVXONNE-SUR-SAONE.

Taken from the Right Bank.

as on our departure from Cambrai; the inhabitants declared that it was not surpassed in duration and intenseness by any in the recollection of the oldest persons. The population was represented as exceeding 4000. The fortifications of the town are of stone, and not at all to be compared, as to height, with those of the Netherlands. The number of English prisoners here exceeded 1000, composed of captains and mates of merchantmen and passengers. When it is considered that each of these received from the French government an allowance of 29 francs per month, (which was the fixed pay,) and beyond it, remittances were continually being made by the prisoners relations in England, it must appear evident that the inhabitants derived considerable advantage, by the establishment of a depôt in this place.

Auxonne is celebrated as having been for some time the residence of Napoleon when a second lieutenant of a regiment of artillery. Many of the people had a perfect recollection of him at that period, anecdotes were not wanting, whether purposely got up or otherwise, it is not necessary

to inquire, to show the early genius of that extraodinary man. It was to the kindness shown to the officers of his regiment by the more respectable part of the people, that placing such a number of prisoners here and causing the circulation of so much money, was to be attributed. The greater part of the English residents occupied two lines of barracks, at the extremity of the town. There were no greater restrictions placed upon them, than on those who preferred to lodge and mix with the townspeople, who were civil and obliging. Living was moderate, with a fine climate and a beautiful country, which in a few weeks after our arrival began to show itself; those who had come from Cambrai, had no reason to regret the change. The commandant, Monsieur de Bross, a lieutenant of gendarmerie, was kind and affable, on all occasions towards the prisoners, he allowed liberty to the fullest extent for perambulating the country, to pass away the time in any kind of exercise or amusement, provided a return to the town, did not occur, after the hours of general muster, on the closing of the gates.

Soon after the establishment of a depôt here, a fire took place, which, had it not been for the exertions of the prisoners, would in all probability have consumed the greater part of the town. The inhabitants were heard on all occasions to declare as much. Representations were made of the assistance rendered by the English on that occasion, to the baron de Vaux, commanding the military division at Dijon, and by him they were transmitted to the government. Napoleon directed that statements should be forwarded the touching the exertions of those most remarkable in extinguishing the fire. Not long afterwards, an order was received for the release of 21 persons, whose exertions had been most prominent on that occasion; they were directed to proceed to Morlaix, for embarkation, and six months pay was allowed to each for maintenance on the road.

As the milder season approached, some desertions took place: a few were fortunate enough to succeed in reaching England. The route taken was generally through Switzerland and Bavaria, into the Austrian states. Letters from

the parties giving an account of those expeditions, stated that they were not only well received, but likewise aided in their attempts, when passing through Switzerland. Bavaria offered as many obstacles as France, her police being extremely numerous and vigilant. Lintz, a town of Bohemia, at that time, one of the first on the frontiers of the Austrian states, offered a place of safety. The circuitous route taken by several of those who succeeded was extraordinary. Some embarked in the ports of Prussia, others taking water conveyance at Vienna reached Constantinople, and thence by Gibraltar finally arrived in England. The fatigue attending such expeditions, added to the anxiety inseparable, (yet what sacrifice is too great when liberty is the object) may be easily conceived; those retaken were arrested in Bavaria, when passing through the kingdom of Wirtemburg; on their return to Auxonne they were on no occasion lodged in prisons, a treatment they owed to the Queen of Wirtemburg, who had been the Princess Royal of England; this feeling for the misfortunes of her countrymen

was the only alleviation she could afford them. Soon after the marriage of Napoleon with the Archduchess Maria Louisa of Austria, the unexpected and happy intelligence was announced in the Moniteur, of the arrival at Morlaix of an English Commissioner, for the purpose of negociating an exchange of prisoners. That agent was Mr. M'Kenzie. Monsieur Demourtier, on the part of the French government, was appointed to confer with him. The joy caused by this announcement, may be easily conceived; those who had been at this period seven years in captivity, could scarcely believe it. Parties were now seen (so certain were they of the favourable result of the negociations) to make preparations for a departure. Which was the best route to travel, the least expensive, and the shortest to the coast, was the common inquiry with them. In the depôts where the soldiers and sailors were confined, this feeling of certainty was carried so far, as to cause the disposal of their cooking utensils which had been provided from the small pay of the French government and donations coming

from England. The disappointment to these men was great—they could not conceive why Mr. M'Kenzie having come over, should return without fulfilling his mission. There was probably, during his residence at Morlaix, too much hope (if not on his part, at least on the part of those with whom he corresponded, in the different depôts) held out to the prisoners. Extracts from that gentleman's letters were to be seen posted up on the barrack wall, conveying all but a certainty of the speedy and happy termination of the efforts then going on to effect our liberation. In one of these announcements, the exact words, purporting to have been received from him, were to this effect,—"The last blow only remains to be struck; there are some inconsiderable points to be got over." Some time elapsed after the appearance of these paragraphs, without learning any thing further of a favourable character. Situated as we were, impatience was natural. "They are playing with us," said many; caricatures were occasionally to be seen, the work of the prisoners, in which Mr. M'Kenzie and M. Demourtier were repre-

sented in argument. One of these pourtrayed the former holding a large hammer over the head of the latter, under which was inscribed, —"Strike!—d—n you, strike!"

All anticipations of the happy result of their conferences were, after a period of six months, brought to an unexpected termination. The precise cause of the rupture could not, at that time, be clearly defined. The French papers, during the stay of the British Commissioner, had been far less bitter in their remarks on our government, than preceding it. They were now seen to break out in strong invectives against England, even going so far as to accuse the government of never having really had an intention to effect an exchange of prisoners; "Otherwise," said the Moniteur, "why did not England send over a nobleman, (several were here named) instead of meeting the emperor's propositions, by deputing an individual, without rank, and unknown in all the diplomatic relations which have existed between the two countries." Shortly after the departure of Mr. M'Kenzie, there appeared in the Journal de l'Empire, a

translated copy of a letter addressed to the editor of the Statesman, under the signature of Candidus. The light there thrown upon the actual cause of the rupture of the negociations, created great discontent, and many of those who had thus to lament their unsuccessful termination, considered a release never would occur. The opinion was general in the depôt that the character of our government could not have been compromised in subscribing to the conditions which Napoleon had proposed. In doing an act of humanity, and restoring to their homes 20,000 Englishmen, the satisfaction of seeing them released must have counterbalanced any feeling arising from the consideration that they had met, or even succumbed to the unjust demands of, as he was then termed, the chief of the French government, in order to effect their liberation.

Long suffering and disappointment make men restless: those who had constitutions likely to bear fatigue, with money necessary to the undertaking to an attempt at escape, were now seen to turn their attention to that object. The

geographical position of Auxonne, computed to be at not less than 600 miles from the nearest part of the coast, made it essential to lay plans maturely and wisely, as recapture was certain to meet with long and severe confinement. France at this time was covered with gens d'armes, police officers, spies of various grades and descriptions; it appeared impossible for even a native to travel from one department to another, without a passport; and even in such cases, the traveller was constantly subjected to the visits and interrogations of these persons. The law, as regarded harbouring the deserter, whether prisoner, refractory conscript, or soldier, was most severe, attended not only by heavy fines, but likewise long imprisonment. Notwithstanding the many obstacles the prisoner had to contend with, desertions now became frequent. Monsieur de Bross, the commandant, of whom I have spoken, once told me he had, in reporting these occurrences, an unpleasant duty to perform. Threats were, time after time held out, that if desertions continued, the depôt would be removed to a citadel. They had not, however, the de-

sired effect. Without troops, save a brigade of gens d'armes, and a small body of the national guard, composed of the inhabitants, who had alternately to mount guard, a duty extremely irksome to them, it was not in the power of M. de Bross to prevent the attempts alluded to. Whether it was owing to a desire on his part to retire from the responsibility, or that the government considered he was not sufficiently active in watching the movements of the depôt, was not known. He was, to the regret of the prisoners, generally, removed; not however before a testimony of their gratitude in the presentation of a handsome piece of plate, was made to him, for the lenity, as well as the liberty, they had injoyed during his command.

His successor, Monsieur Bertrand, a Chef d'Escadron of Gendarmerie, and a member of the Legion of Honour, (said to be a relation of the count of that name) arrived in the early part of November. Immediately afterwards all egress from the town was interdicted: the musters were to be made three times a day, and permission to appear in the streets after dusk, was

withdrawn. A body of foot artillery arriving from Italy, on its way to Dijon, in passing through Auxonne, received orders to remain, to guard the prisoners. All hope of a return to England having vanished on the failure of Mr. M'Kenzie's negociations, and seeing that a citadel would be the abode of those who did not attempt to escape, I came to the determination to embrace the first opportunity that might appear favourable, of quitting Auxonne. It was necessary, when having such intention, to be particularly guarded in communicating it: even the least cause for suspicion, Monsieur Bertrand would have considered a justification for at once removing the party into close confinement. Various plans suggested themselves, of which it is not necessary that I should trouble the reader. There was one, however, by which four friends of mine had succeeded, in the short space of a month, in reaching England, and I had the good fortune, in due time, to ascertain how their escape had been accomplished. They had travelled by a carriage conveyance, and were conducted by a guide. An opportunity

soon offered of an interview at the house of a fellow prisoner, to that individual. This occurred on the evening of the first of December, 1811.

It was soon perceptable that this conductor was not a Frenchman, but a native of a canton, not very distant from the frontier. He did not seem to possess the acuteness necessary to convey persons through France (guarded as she then was) unprovided with passports. He was, however, frank and candid, evinced by his representing the difficulties we should have to surmount. After much conversation, agreeing upon the sum to be paid by myself, and a friend, who was to accompany me, the following night was appointed for the completion of our arrangements, as to the mode of travelling, the exact line of road, and the means to be adopted to get out of the town. These arrangements made, one half of the money was to be paid on leaving, and security given for the remainder, the payment to occur by our order on a gentleman at Auxonne, when finally embarked. The night fixed for the attempt, was that of the fourth;

should it not then be effected, the following one was to be tried, and if unsuccessful, a further interview in the town was to take place on the evening of the sixth.

Before I quit Auxonne, the reader will excuse me while I relate a few anecdotes, and occurrences, the result of a residence of ten months there, the entire of which was spent in living with a French family, as well as in the society of their immediate relatives. I was, at the commencement of this captivity, desirous of ascertaining whether, as Englishmen, we were objects of dislike to the inhabitants generally, as the military and those under government, seized all occasions to show we were to them. It is with pleasure I record, that during the whole time of my stay, not an instance occurred in which I had (nor indeed, as far as my knowledge went, had any of my countrymen,) cause to complain, either of a want of civility, or of those attentions, which alone make captivity bearable.

During the winter, subscription balls were got up by some of the English residing in town. These were attended by the greater part of the

respectable inhabitants. The mayor, the commandant of the town, and the officer placed immediately over us, invariably attended, with their families. These entertainments did not pass without return from our French acquaintances, who appeared anxious that our reception should not fall short of that which they had been accustomed to receive from us.

The commandant of the town, Monsieur Champneuf, frequently gave parties at his residence: to them a certain number of the English were invited. The example would, doubtless, have been followed by others of the authorities, had it not been for an occurrence which gave great offence to him. That functionary had in early life been a barber. Some mischievous wag, thought it becoming to exhibit a drawing (pasted on the church door) in which Monsieur Champneuf was represented in the act of shaving the mayor, the officer in command of the prisoners, holding the basin.* The indignity was not to be passed over slightly: his parties

* This, it was said, was the handy work of one of our countrymen. The likenesses were extremely correct.

were discontinued, nor did he afterwards attend any of those given by our countrymen.

Not long after my arrival at Auxonne, in company with two friends, I had the unexpected pleasure of finding myself in the presence, for a short time, of the celebrated Madame de Staël. This occurred at the moment of paying a visit to a fellow prisoner, occupying apartments in the house of the individual who kept the "Post aux Chevaux," where she alighted while fresh post horses were being harnessed to her carriage. On coming into the room (we were then seated before the fire) a chair was offered, in accepting it she said, "I see you are Englishmen, I hope you are not prisoners of war." At this time we were ignorant as to who the lady was. She talked incessantly; there was certainly nothing very feminine in the appearance of Madame de Stael; her dress and manner differed widely from the generality of the French women we were accustomed to see. Her inquiries principally went to ascertain our opinions of the French people, if we did not perceive a great difference between them and our own country. "You should be

proud," she said, "to belong to so great a nation as England. Your country is the happiest in the world. Here, as you must see, is the shadow without the substance. France, any thing but happy, is borne down by the weight of conscriptions and exactions. Here you hear of nothing but '*National Glory.*' See at what cost it has been acquired. The misery which this war entails, you can form but a feint idea of; God only knows when it will end. I regret to see gentlemen deprived of their liberty as you are; however, you must wait with patience." Her conversation then turned on the subject of various English writers and historians. Speaking of Mr. Fox, she said, "I once corresponded with him; he was indeed a great man. In England they are ever to be met with; you have Mr. Canning, Mr. Wilberforce, Lord Henry Petty, Sir James Mackintosh, and many others still left." The carriage being announced, she said, —"now gentlemen you will ask yourselves who can that lady be who has thus introduced herself to us; I will tell you; I am the daughter of the celebrated M. Necker, my name is De Staël;

I wish it were in my power to restore you to your friends, but I cannot;" then offering her hand to each she departed. A young man who accompanied Madame de Staël, we were afterwards told was her son.* They were then on their way to their family residence in Switzerland. Napoleon had ordered this lady not to approach nearer the capital than 40 leagues. She was submitting to the mandate at the period of our meeting.

I had ever a desire to ascertain the real sentiments of the French people towards their chief. One occasion, in particular, occurred during my residence at Auxonne of ascertaining this. In speaking of him they were necessarily cautious. There were opportunities, notwithstanding, in which their real sentiments were to be gathered, though conveyed in an ambiguous way. On one of these when, tête a tête with a French gentleman, who lodged in the same house with me, inquiring if the Emperor was as much beloved as their papers would lead us to believe, his reply was, "Certainly not! and

* Some time afterwards the papers announced the death of this young man, in a duel with a Swedish officer, at Stralsund.

I will tell you, *entre nous*, why he cannot be. Napoleon has done a great deal for France. After so many revolutions and changes, the country required a leader, in order that some established form of government should be seen to exist. On coming to power, he put aside the various factions who were struggling for it. His power, which soon became supreme, was owing, as you should know, to the victories he has gained. But why not stop? He is now as great as he ever can be. You see the result of these continued wars; there is scarcely a man left who is not in some military capacity. You must have seen, whenever you were at a *guinguette* or a fête, one man escorting three or four young women." I answered that I had frequently remarked as much. "Then," he continued, "how can the Emperor be liked, when he takes, by one process or other, the bulk of the male population. That is not all, you think probably every body is poor in France. No such thing: there is plenty of money, but all are anxious to conceal it. You must have remarked when, by a decree, all the old silver was called in, (threat-

ening a considerable loss upon it at a certain date) that crowns and half crowns came forth quite black, proving they had been buried. "There never was," he said, "a greater act of injustice, than that of the Emperor ordering lists of persons to be made out by the prefects of the departments, who were supposed to possess property. By that decree, any lady whose fortune exceeded a specified sum, cannot legally marry without his consent. The object was to get the bulk of the property centered in the military profession. When he commenced this war with the women, he little knew what he was about. Women like to select their husbands, without having to obtain the Emperor's sanction of them, and which you must frequently have seen in the Moniteur, where the paragraph appears. 'The Emperor this day signed the contract of marriage between M— Colonel of the guard and Mademoiselle ——;' but," said my friend, "this is not the only mischief which results from its being known that a family has property, it prevents children receiving an education; parents anxious that they should be considered as indigent, not only as

regards the marriage of their daughters, but likewise to avoid the exactions of the government for one purpose or other, prefer letting their children go into the world without other advantage, than reading and writing, rather than expose them to the calls which would be made upon them."

It has frequently occurred to me, how just the remarks of this candid neighbour were. Education was indeed, at this period, at a low ebb. There were several schools at Auxonne, the scholars of which paraded in military costume, and it was ludicrous to observe boys not more than ten years old with cocked hats and military coats.

Eugene Beauharnois the vice-king of Italy, passed through Auxonne during this period; as did likewise the empress Josephine after her separation from Napoleon. We thought her a remarkably pretty woman, rather under the middle size, and dark complexioned. She returned the salutations made by those who witnessed her arrival, with great affability.

I now return to our meditated escape. The place for meeting, was the main road towards

Gray. At two miles from Auxonne there is a wood through which that road passes. About half-way we were to be met by the guide, with a cabriolet, at ten o'clock at night. The signal of his arrival was to be made by a whistle, at intervals of ten minutes. For two days and nights, there had been very heavy rain: the river to the right of the town had overflowed to such an extent that, for half a mile from the ramparts, it was a sheet of water; any attempt to get out on that side was useless. The only chance was by the Besançon gate. Aware of a friend's intention to make a similar attempt, and that he had for such purpose provided a rope with which to descend the ramparts, our plans were communicated to him. His assistance was kindly offered, not only to aid us in getting out of the town, but likewise the use of the rope. On the evening of the third, and at some risk, the position of the sentries on that side of the town was ascertained. They were found thickly posted.

Near the gate of which I have spoken, there was an inconsiderable ditch, immediately under

the wall of the rampart. This was supposed to offer no great obstruction. For ten days previous, no desertions had taken place. Monsieur Bertrand conceived that it was entirely owing to the great number of troops which had arrived and kept continually on guard, that the attempts at escape were discontinued.* The point selected to scale the ramparts was about half way from the first sentry's box, to the guard house at the gate. The distance between them might probably be about twenty-five yards. Attending muster, and for the last time, in the afternoon of the 4th December, from four o'clock till eight the necessary arrangements for our departure were made. Money was sewn in parts of our clothing, a pocket compass and charts were provided, as well as several *restoratives* necessary in the event of being retaken,

* The morning after our departure twenty of these horse artillery were dispatched in various directions, to warn the inhabitants of the adjoining villages of our escape. Two of them deserted, and on our return to Auxonne, they were inmates of the town gaol with us, for several days previous to their removal to the public works, to which they had been condemned by a court martial, for the period of five years. They were fine young men.

and placed in prisons where no immediate nourishment could be procured. At eight o'clock, my companion, and the friend who had engaged to assist us, arrived. We separately made the best of our way to the rampart: fortunately the night was extremely dark, and the rain fell in torrents, circumstances much in our favour. The sentry was snugly housed in his box: at a few yards in the rear of the guard house, lying concealed for a short time underneath the inner part of the mound of the rampart, the rope attached to a poker was thrust into the sod, and thrown across the rampart over the outer wall; creeping on hands and knees, as it had been previously decided, I was the first to descend, my companion immediately followed. Unfortunately, in his hurry to descend, several bricks fell from the upper part of the wall, making a considerable splash in the ditch, it was extraordinary the sentry's attention was not excited. Contrary to expectation, owing to heavy rain, the ditch was middle deep: here we remained a few minutes close under the wall, during which our friend gradually withdrew at the rope. The

best of the way was now made to attain the high road where the guide was to be met. Running quickly, and for some distance, to get clear of the town, we rested for a few moments, to take, as it was hoped, for the last time, a look at Auxonne. The lights in the barrack windows, the residence of the greater part of the prisoners, called to recollection friends left in them, surmising how great their astonishment would be on ascertaining, on the following morning, that we had departed.

On arriving at the centre of the wood, the guide's signal was heard. It was accompanied by the barking of a dog. Conceiving that a snare might have been laid, as he had not previously mentioned having such a companion, we retired for a few minutes on the right hand side of the road. On his coming up, we immediately got into the cabriolet: the horses heads were turned, and half an hour's drive brought us within a mile of the town of Gray, at which place the horses that were to conduct us to the coast, had been prepared. They were in high condition; that on which the guide rode was occasionally

to replace the one in the cabriolet, driven by us. Travelling the whole of this night, though the roads were in a very bad state, we reached, the following morning at eight o'clock, a small auberge in the vicinity of Langeon, on the high road to, and within a short distance of, the town of Langres. Hence to Auxonne was considered to be not less than thirty miles. To persons who have never been placed in the situation of attempting to escape from an enemy's country, it is almost impossible to convey an idea of the suspicion which the casual glance of a stranger carries with it. We thought every person we met had a knowledge as to who we were. This feeling however, wore off with the progress off the journey. Here the dog, of which I have spoken, refused to follow his master, a circumstance which seemed to occupy the thoughts of our conductor materially. Continuing the journey at 11 o'clock, making a detour by Langres, we stopped at half-past three o'clock at Vasaignes, a short distance from the town of Chaumont; rest had become necessary. The guide being provided with a passport, and we without any,

it was thought advisable that I and my companion should sleep this night in a barn at a short distance from the house. A mattrass and covering was provided, and it went off comfortably. On the 6th the weather cleared. Passing by Chaumont, leaving the right of the road to Bar-sur-Aube, we rested at four o'clock at no great distance from Troys. There was nothing remarkable on this day's journey except meeting some gens d'armes escorting a party of French deserters, going towards Langres. On their appearing at a distance, the guide rode on a few hundred yards before. Contrary to expectation these persons politely took of their hats, a compliment which amused us exceedingly; it was duly returned.*

This night afforded the comfort of good beds, the guide took up his quarters at Troys. The following morning the 7th, passing under the walls of that town by a fine road lined with

* Had they been aware of our situation at that moment, they would have derived considerable advantage by our capture, viz:—40 francs for each, and half the value of the horses and cabriolet, which the guide stated had cost him something more than four thousand francs.

trees, the journey was continued to the left of Nogent-sur-Seine; at five p.m. we reached an auberge at the entrance of the village of La Maison Rouge. This day we passed several detachments of cavalry, composed of chasseurs-a-cheval, going towards Nogent; there was nothing remarkable, either in the appearance of the men, or horses. At eight o'clock, salvos of artillery were heard apparently from Fontainbleau. This led to the supposition that Napoleon had arrived there, from the capital. The night's rest was here taken on chairs before a good fire, as we had to proceed a few hours before daylight the following morning. On the 8th, passing by Nangis, as likewise a small town, (the name of which the guide did not state) we quitted the high road to Paris, and proceeded towards Meaux, crossing the Seine by the bridge at that place; some time after dark, we rested at an inconsiderable inn, in the Fauxbourg. The three days' journeys had been extremely long, the horses like ourselves required rest, the following day therefore was necessarily spent here. The guide procured us a bed in the garret of this small place,

taking up his quarters in the town of Meaux. This place we left on the morning of the 10th, and continued the journey by a cross-road, for a considerable distance before we attained the main one to Soissons; here we lodged in a private house not very distant from the entrance of the town. Our conductor seemed to be very well acquainted with the inmates; for him a good bed was provided, whether it was owing to any fear as to a nocturnal visit from the police or gens d'armes could not be devined, we were however, compelled to sleep in a cellar immediately under the room we had supped in, the entrance to which was by a trap-door. It was a very cold place, and so infested with rats, that we got but little sleep. Soon after departing the following morning at eight o'clock, we passed several detachments of troops going towards Soissons. This day's journey brought us to an auberge, in a village near the town of Laon.* It afforded more comfort than any pre-

* This town (which I had passed the previous year) was in 1814, the scene of much severe fighting. The allies having possession of it. Napoleon with a con-

ceeding one. After a short journey on the 12th, reached the Fauxbourg of St. Quintin, there also we had good accommodation. On the 13th, after meeting two brigades of gens d'armes, who appeared scarcely to notice us, came to a village a little distance beyond Arras, on the direct road to Bethune. The guide for the first time slept in the same room with us. Now in the vicinity of the three principal depôts, Arras, Cambrai and Valenciennes, containing so many of our countrymen; it might be presumed the country people were more or less in the habit of seeing the prisoners occasionally visit the villages around, great caution was therefore necessary. Eleven days had passed since quitting Auxonne without any apparent suspicion as to who we were. This security inspired the hope, that the remainder of the journey would be effected in a similar manner. A circumstance, however, occurred

siderable force attempted to dislodge them. After two days of fruitless attempts, he returned to Corbigney. There was no place occupied by the allies during that memorable campaign, where the efforts of Napoleon were more signally defeated, than in the attempt to regain the town of Laon.

on the morning of the 16th, showing the uncertainty as well as the danger which attend such undertakings. Breakfast was scarcely over, when waiting for the cabriolet which the guide had a few moments previously gone to prepare, to our inexpressible astonishment he suddenly returned, and in agonies of grief, said "we were all taken." At first it was impossible to credit the statement, while endeavouring to persuade him that he was labouring under a delusion, a guarde-de-Foret entered.* Making obeisance and taking off his hat, he shut the door, at the same time placing his back against it and drawing his sword, he addressed us as follows. "Gentlemen, we have been on the look-out for you in this neighbourhood some days; your descriptions have been received by the commandant at Arras. I recommend you quietly to go with me there;

* This corps was composed of old soldiers, though not with the strength and power of the gens d'armes. Their occupation was to search woods and forests for conscripts; or soldiers who deserting, generally took refuge in them. The search was usually made with dogs trained for the purpose. These men were generally good marksmen, many of the English persons who attempted to escape were retaken by them

pointing to the guide, he said, "you have brought this unfortunate man to ruin; he will be tried and sent to the public works. I need scarcely add also, that you too will be severely punished." During this notification, our conductor was completely overcome, walking up and down the room, wringing his hands, and crying loud enough for the inmates of the house to hear. After a few moments' reflection, as to what was to be done, the unwelcome visitor was implored not to stop our guide; telling him that he could get nothing by his capture, though with us it was different. A proposal was immediately made, that if he would allow the guide quietly to depart, we would recompense him with one hundred franc. But "why stop any of us?" was the question now put; "for the capture of myself and friend," I said, "the most you can get will be eighty francs." This anxiety to save our conductor, seemed to make him somewhat inclined to relent. After a few moments' pause, and seeing this apparent change, an offer followed, that provided he would let the whole of us depart, he should receive ten Napoleons.

Suiting the action to the word, the money was put on the table, which stood but a few paces from where he had stationed himself.

He now desired us to speak gently. It was evident the sight of the gold had wrought a change in him. After some conversation, assuring him repeatedly that he had nothing to fear, whatever might hereafter befall us, he left the door, took up the money, and immediately sheathing his sword, went up to the guide, desiring him to swear, on his knees that, if we were retaken, he and we would deny all knowledge of him. This the guide instantly complied with, placing himself in the attitude of prayer, his eyes fixed on the ceiling in the most fervent manner, he hoped every thing bad might befall him, if he denounced this guarde de forèt. A similar declaration was drawn from us, without, however, the formality which had attended that of the guide. In a moment afterwards, passing into an adjoining room, he beckoned to our conductor: a short conversation passed between them, during which it was observed that a further sum of money was placed in his hand.

On the guide returning, he said, "After this terrible affair, (for there is no trusting these men) all I can do is to see you away in the cabriolet: drive quickly direct on the road to Lille; if I find all right, I will overtake you by four o'clock." The advice was speedily acted upon. This unlooked-for occurrence damped the hopes and expectations which had been entertained, and regret necessarily followed, that we had made the attempt in this direction, and still more, during so inclement a season.

At about three o'clock to our great joy, our conductor once more appeared. He was greatly dejected, nor were all our endeavours to remove his fears that we should not finally reach the coast, of any effect. The guarde de forêt had represented the roads about Lille, as covered with troops. This statement was found, as we approached that place, to be quite correct, several gens d'armes passed about four o'clock; they took little notice of us; when stopping to water the horses at the door of the inn, one of these men came out, walking up to our horse, which he seemed to admire very much, and patting him, as

likewise examining his mouth, he said, "what a beautiful horse, he is quite young too"—he did not however address any remark to us, an omission for which he was readily excused. On arriving at the Fauxbourg of Lille, it was evident owing to the number of the military, rest was not to be had there, our only chance was to make a circuitous tour of the outer works of the town, and on reaching the direct road to Courtray, proceed a short distance to some habitation where accommodation might be had.* It was unfortunately very dark, the lowness of the ground round the works, owing to the heavy fall of rain, had become a swamp and our horses were at intervals knee deep. It was found too dangerous, and next to impossible to proceed. Thus situated there was no alternative but to await the approach of day. The guide, on horseback, took up his station close to our cabriolet, the situation of the

*At this time there were three Captains of vessels, confined in the town prison of Lille, having endeavoured to escape from Auxonne they had been retaken in attempting to pass the gates of that place. Had it not been for this circumstance, we should have preferred running the risk of traversing that city rather than incur the danger to which a passage round its fortifications exposed us.

poor horses was pitiable, never did I pass a more miserable night; daylight showed how fortunate it was that the attempt had not been further proceeded with. Immediately in front, and at a very inconsiderable distance was the fosse of the outer part of the works; advancing a few yards further, we as well as horses and guide, would have been precipitated into the ditch, a height from the glacis of not less than one hundred and fifty feet.

At nine o'clock on the morning of the 18th, the long wished-for road to Courtray was attained; arriving at the first village, the same obstacle as the Fauxbourg at Lille had presented, warned us no rest was to be attained there, being occupied by a considerable body of troops. Notwithstanding the fatigue of the horses, the journey was continued towards Courtray, stopping for an hour to bait and procure refreshment. At six p.m. we were fortunate enough to reach a comfortable farm house on the right hand side of the road, a short distance from Ghent, the lights of which were perceptible: the inmates were Flemands. They received us not only without suspi-

cion, but with great civility. Early on the morning of the 19th, our conductor announced the journey could no longer be prosecuted with the carriage, owing to the danger in attempting to pass the gates, Ghent being surrounded by water, (the rivers Scheldt, Lys, Lieue, and Mourwater) there was no possibility of making a detour with the vehicle. In order to ascertain if there would be any great risk in our walking through that town: he repaired there. On his return he said all would be right provided we followed his instructions. During this absence, conversations were had with our host and his family, consisting of his wife and two daughters, one of whom was a remarkably handsome girl, of apparently 16 years of age. To our great astonishment, the conductor had told these people who we were; events during our stay here, proved his confidence in them not to have been misplaced. The old man related many anecdotes of the period, when French Flanders was occupied by the allies under H.R.H. the duke of York, whom he asserted he had frequently seen. It appeared to afford him satisfaction when speaking

of that period. The British troops, he declared, were much more liked by the inhabitants than the Austrians and Hessians serving with them. Leaving these good people, (not without receiving their repeated good wishes for our safe arrival in England) on the morning of the 20th of December, we proceeded for Ghent: with a better knowledge of the French language than my companion, owing to longer residence in France, the guide requested me to lead the way and at an inconsiderable distance they were to follow. This proposal was not an agreeable one, as in the event of my being taken, they would have an opportunity of altering their course or of returning; however, I was obliged to submit. After passing the draw bridge at the town gate, I was to continue my course down the street in front, until arriving at a large white house, (an inn) before which, there was a narrower street terminating with a draw bridge over a canal, and easily to be seen from the house described. I followed scrupulously those instructions. The sentry at the town gate did not even honor me with a look, and I passed unsuspected

a company of soldiers in front of the guard house, at the moment they were being inspected by their officers. I had not proceeded far when a person meanly attired, bent his way towards me from the opposite side of the street. On coming up, he put a question in German, which I could not comprehend, and telling him so in French; he made a polite move of his hat and left me. On reaching the inn door, I turned to look for my friend and guide. I was happy to see them at no great distance, and coming forward. They had been much alarmed when seeing me addressed by the stranger I have mentioned. "I shall now appear," said the conductor "as your servant." He then went into the inn to order private apartments and dinner, at which he waited, to our great amusement in livery, viz: a green coat with laced collar and trowsers striped with red. In this occupation he was assisted by a very pretty Flemish servant girl. At three o'clock, the carriage was announced, and the bill being settled, we were in the act of descending the stairs, when he, unseen, put a note into my hand, desiring it might not

be opened till we had quitted the town. On seeing the carriage, a handsome fiacre with two fine bay horses, the driver in livery, it was hard to suppress a smile. The politeness of the landlord materially added to the difficulty, as he handed us into the carriage, and afterwards taking of his hat, bowing with a grace which no Frenchman could exceed, he wished us a pleasant ride, at the same time, hoping that on our return we would favour him with our custom.

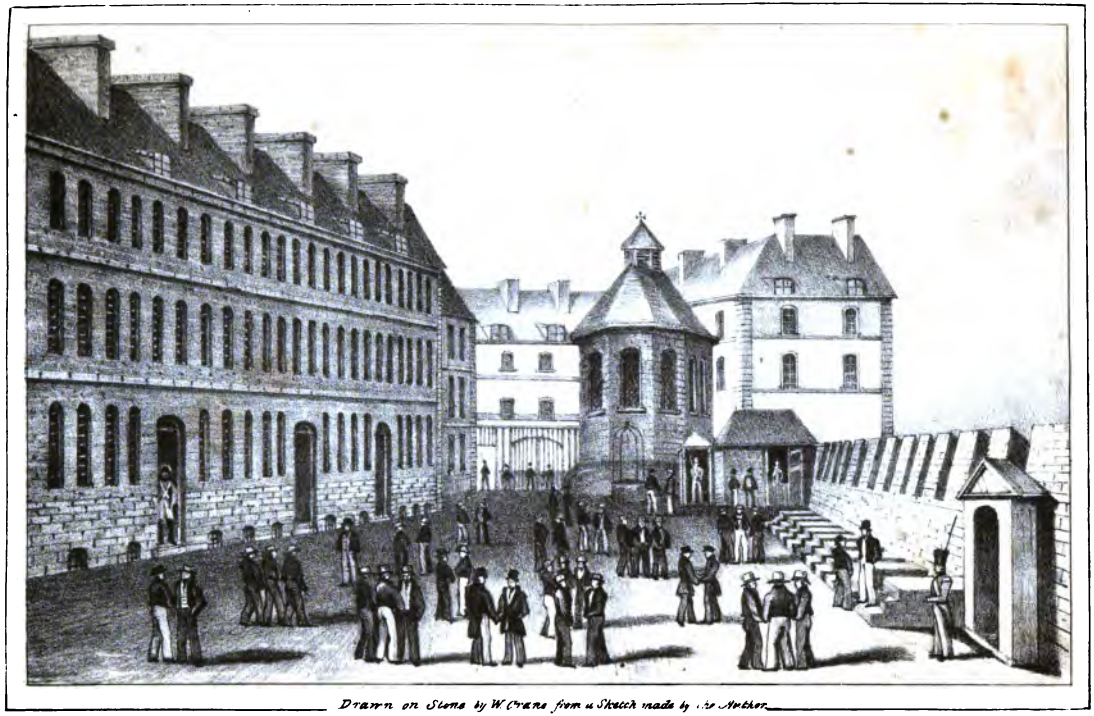
The guide's note alluded to stated, the carriage was paid for, that on arriving at Philippine we were on no account to have communication with any fisherman who might be in the inn to which the driver would conduct us. Further, that in the course of the night he would follow.

So near the completion of the journey, the disaster which had occurred near Arras and the escape from accident near the fortifications of Lille began to be forgotten. Without anything remarkable occurring we reached the inn at Philippine soon after five p.m. The grateful sound of the waves rolling on the beach indicated a termination to the land part of our expedition. A

private room was here obtained and by the side of a good fire we talked over occurrences of the journey, fancying how delighted our friends at Auxonne would be to learn the success of our undertaking. We were left to ourselves but for a short time in this apartment. A tap was made at the door, on its being opened, in walked a stout man with the appearance of a Fisherman, and in broken English he welcomed us to Philippine—unexpected as this visit was, we did not forget the injunction of our conductor, and the intruder was told, in French, that we were ignorant as to what he said, that the sooner he retired the more agreeable it would be to us. He again came in about half an hour saying I have a letter for one of you.

He then put into my hand a small note, its contents surprised me* There could be no doubt he was the person who our guide had engaged to

* It was written by a friend of mine who had effected his escape a few weeks preceding from Auxonne, with our conductor. It was without direction, and to the effect that the bearer had conveyed him and his companion safely to Flushing roads; that there was nothing to fear in trusting the person who would present it.



Drawn on Stone by W. Evans from a Sketch made by the Author

COURT YARD IN THE FORT OF BITCHE.

Promenade of the Prisoners.

carry us to Flushing and I desired him to be seated. "I got away four of your countrymen," he said, "a short time ago. They came here with a guide, and I have been on the look out for him with two more for several days." At twelve o'clock our friend arrived from Ghent—he was astonished, yet rejoiced to see us in company with the individual alluded to. Every preparation was then made to embark at break of day. Never did night appear so long. It is vain to attempt a description of our sensations while thus awaiting the moment to quit this enslaved country.

According to the boatman's statement, we were but a few hundred yards from where the boat lay on the beach. The night passed in writing to friends at Auxonne, and settling accounts with our conductor; an order was prepared for the payment of the money due to him, and which would, as by agreement, be placed in his hands, at the moment of our stepping into the boat. Daylight was just appearing, on the morning of the 20th, when leaving the inn and proceeding a short distance by a dyke, accompanied by the boatman and

the guide, we arrived at the beach. The sea once more seen, created sensations indiscribable: the boat (of Dutch build, and of inconsiderable size) lay partly aground. Our faithful conductor was now in great trouble at the idea of parting; he asserted that, if fortunate enough to convey two more Englishmen to the coast, he would embark with them, fearful that the government, owing to his repeated absence, would suspect his occupation. He seemed to think that the guarde de forèt, by whom we had been stopped near Arras might, although he had received a bribe, reveal and give such a particular description of him to the authorities, as to place him in great danger. We now took a farewell, and, as it was hoped, for the last time, of the French shore. Aided by a fresh breeze, our boat soon approached the Scheldt. The guide remained for some time on the beach gazing at us, and occasionally waving his hat. In about an hour afterwards a patrole of horsemen was seen passing by the spot where we had embarked; in moving along the shore, they frequently turned to look at our boat. Happily we were beyond

their reach, and if they had even suspected our being in her, pursuit was impossible, as there was no other at hand. The Scheldt is of considerable width from the spot where we embarked, to Middleburg; on attaining the centre, the breeze freshening enabled us tor each Walcheren by three o'clock in the afternoon.

I now proceed to give a detailed account of the occurrence to which our recapture was attributable. Owing to it the hopes entertained of a speedy and happy arrival in England were frustrated.

CHAPTER IV.

RECAPTURE ON THE ISLAND OF SOUTH BEVELAND—TREATMENT FOLLOWING—OCCURRENCES TILL ARRIVING AT ANTWERP.

THERE were several vessels at anchor on reaching the roadstead of Flushing; of the number, three French men of war,—two corvettes and a brig. The cold was felt severe, owing to the sea air, to which we had been unaccustomed for some time.* The boatman's son, a boy about

* When on the passage to Flushing the boatman told us, he knew where two Englishmen were then concealed on the coast near, endeavouring to effect their escape. According to his statement they had made many fruitless attempts to embark, that the authorities were aware of their being on the coast, and consequently used the greatest vigilance to recapture them. It afterwards occurred to me these were Messrs. Street and Gordon, midshipmen, who had escaped from Verdun. Some months afterwards, letters were received at the Fort of Bitche from that place, giving the melancholy intelligence that these gentlemen were drowned in endeavouring to reach England, owing as it was presumed to the boat being unseaworthy or the boisterous state of the weather.

twelve years old, was directed to proceed to the town o Middleburg, with a letter to a gentleman, through whose means, a passage to England was to be obtained. That letter had been given to me without signature or address: it had nevertheless a private mark, by which the writer would be recognized, and the address, which I had concealed in the collar of my coat, was now written upon it in pencil. In a short time the boy returned with the letter, saying that the gentleman had left the preceding day for the town of Ziriczee, in the island of Showen, distant about eighteen miles to the N.E. of Flushing. This occurrence was fatal to our hopes. We were now in a country, the language of which we were completely ignorant, moreover there was no guide or friend to assist us; thus situated, escape seemed next to impossible. The passage hence to Ziriczee lies between the island of Walcheren and that of South Beveland. It is intersected with banks which can only be passed with a favourable wind and high tide. Night was approaching: to remain in the boat till the following morning, as well as to attempt

the passage during the night, was equally impossible. By a decree of Napoleon, all fishermen had a specified time allowed to follow their occupations; the limit varied according to the situation of the fishing ground, and the period of a boat leaving the place where it was registered, to its return, was regulated by this circumstance. The one in which we were, would have to be inspected, according to these regulations, that night, when the fisherman's account of the days' proceeding would be required. Thus situated, we had no alternative but to land, and embark early the following morning to proceed to Ziriczee, there to join the gentleman whose absence from Middleburg we had so much cause to regret. To those who have visited the islands at the mouth of the Scheldt, it is unnecessary to point out the little shelter they afford to persons situated as we were, without woods or outhouses, at a distance from the farms, the night could only be passed, more particularly owing to the severity of the cold, under cover. The boatman landed for the purpose of ascertaining whether there was a

house not very distant from the beach, where we might pass the night in security. He soon returned stating, that there was a farm at a short distance, in which he was quite sure, we should be safe, at the same time offering to conduct us to it; in the morning, at an early hour he was to come to announce when the boat was again afloat. With this assurance we landed, and after a short walk arrived at the farm house; in it were many inmates who were sitting before a large fire, taking tea, with a repast of salt herrings. The entire roof of the room was covered with smoked and dried fish, giving any thing but an agreeable odour.

After the boatman had left, the master of the house, who had the appearance of a Dutch boor, said, "I dont know if you can stop here after all; I would not have an Englishman caught in my house for all the world." He spoke French indifferently; after some conversation promising he should be well rewarded for providing us a bed, he said, "Well, I will see what can be done." Immediately afterwards, speaking to his frow, (as he called her) they

went up stairs; on their return he desired us to follow him; we were conducted to a small room, or rather a garret, in which it was impossible to stand erect; here he pointed to what he termed a bed; it could not be even called a mattrass, being merely a large sack filled with straw; there was no pillow, and the covering was a blanket over which was thrown a fisherman's great coat; he said, "if you like to take this, and stop here, you may;" a refusal on our part was impossible, as we had not slept since leaving the comfortable farm house in the vicinity of Ghent. He was now asked to supply us with a bottle of gin and a jug of water; these were brought, the provision which had been laid in at Phillippine was enjoyed with addition of the bottle spoken of, the quality of which was excellent: shortly after eight o'clock making the best that was possible of the bed I have described, we retired to rest. It was not of long duration; a little after nine o'clock persons were heard coming up stairs as if accoutred. Fears were now excited that we had been betrayed; to get out of this abode was impossible, as there was neither window nor

skylight in it. On the door being opened, an officer, behind whom were several soldiers, came in; addressing us in French, and in a rude manner, he asked who we were; the answer was, travellers going to Rotterdam; he directly said, "I see you are not Frenchmen;" replying that we were natives of Switzerland, he addressed us in German. Without a knowledge of that language, which seemingly he understood perfectly, he said, "at all events whatever you are you must go with me." Conducted by this officer and five soldiers, arm in arm with them, in about half an hour we arrived at the guard house, containing apparently about two companies of soldiers; the greater part were Dutch; they were laying on a boarded platform, and the moment we entered they crowded round us. The officer disappeared for a short time; on his return, bringing with him a municipal officer, we were interrogated at some length. It was useless now to deny who and what we were. This night passed as might be supposed miserably; there was a fire at one end of the building, with two benches before it. The officer said, "You may

sit here (pointing to them) all night, in the morning you will be sent to head quarters."

Fatigued, and still more dispirited by this disaster, little or no sleep was obtained. Early in the morning of the 21st, being placed in a cart along with the officer and two soldiers, in whose power we had the preceding evening fallen, after a ride of about two hours, we arrived at the town of Goes, the capital of the island of South Beveland. During this journey we were surprised to see boys on their way to school, each with a pipe slung over the shoulder, and a tobacco pouch attached to it, with a book under the opposite arm. The officer stated that it was necessary for the inhabitants of all ages living here to smoke, owing to the humidity of the climate, and particularly at this season of the year. Several draught and other horses, in waggons and cars, were met, which surpassed greatly in appearance any we had seen in France. On entering the gate of the town groups of persons came round us, drawn doubtless to ascertain who we were; their curiosity was great, and they followed our cart to the house of the

commandant of the town. On arriving there the officer desired us to descend and follow him; we were then ushered into the presence of a military man, apparently between fifty or sixty years of age; he was of gentlemanly appearance, and had several decorations. At a table with him were three ladies; those we took to be his wife and daughters; his secretary was immediately sent for, in the interval he desired us to be seated. He called upon the officer to state every particular of our capture. It was perceptible, in making his report, he wished to impress on the commandant the extraordinary vigilance he had shown on the occasion. This fulsome account concluded, we were desired to give particulars of ourselves; on being deputed by my friend, I told this officer, it was in vain to conceal our situation, that we were Englishmen endeavouring to escape from France. "Pray what depôt were you at," he asked, "and when did you quit it?" On giving the information, he referred to a map, and immediately said "it is quite impossible." At this time our persons had not been examined. I produced a pocket chart on which the line of route

taken was marked, and his attention was called to it, once more assuring him that the statement which I had previously made was true. "But how could you travel such a distance in so short a time, and above all, how could you get to this island," he inquired, replying that we had travelled by any conveyance offering, that we must necessarily have come to the island in a boat, he turned sharply, asking by what conveyance and by what boat? "Who dared to aid you in either I should like to know;" without waiting for an answer he continued, "the story you tell me is quite improbable, I see who you are, you have been landed from a British man of war on the coast, and I must tell you that you have placed yourselves in a very serious position: probably you do not know that there is a decree of the Emperor to this effect,—any person found landing on any part of the territories of France from a British ship shall be tried as a spy, and, if found guilty, is to be shot; on the latter word he laid considerable stress. "I am quite aware Sir," I said, "of the decree which you allude to; we have nothing whatever to fear from it. The com-

mandant at Auxonne when written to, will verify the statement I have made as regards our belonging to that depôt."

The officer was now called upon to sign the account which had been drawn out relative to us, he then departed. During the conversation alluded to, it was perceptible that the ladies (particularly the elder one) felt for the situation in which my friend and myself now were. On the commandant retiring, the question was asked, whether we were not very much fatigued. It was impossible to give a negative reply. "You shall have refreshment," she said, "immediately." It was indeed acceptable, as we had been without any since the preceding night, at eight o'clock. The ladies, during the absence of the commandant, and while we were taking the refreshment, put a variety of questions to us. The officer's wife appeared much affected, saying she felt greatly for us, and that she was sure her husband did also, but he could not do otherwise than perform his duty. On the commandant returning, and seeing us in conversation with the members of his family, he turned to

his wife, saying, "Do not cry, my dear; I pity these gentlemen as much as you do: I only hope they are what they pretend to be." Afterwards, addressing himself to me, he asked, "pray, how long have you been in France, Sir?"—to which I answered, nineteen months; that my friend had been about seven. He then said, "it has often surprised me, to see that almost all your officers speak French, whereas I have frequently met with ours, who, though they have been a long time in England, cannot speak a word of your language." He added, "about twelve months ago, your army occupied this town, the inhabitants observed there were few of the officers who did not speak French well; how is this difference? Does acquiring a knowledge of French form an essential part of education in your country?" I told him it was certainly considered essential to acquire a knowledge of it, as a language more or less known all over the globe; that go where he might, however distant the clime, he would invariably find some one speaking French, consequently, in all the seminaries, (where the scholars were

children of persons capable of affording a liberal education) instructions in the French language were rarely omitted: that many were to be met with having a thorough grammatical knowledge thereof, yet wanting the true pronunciation, and which could scarcely be acquired except by a residence with French people. He then said, "I perfectly understand, by your explanation, how it is." In answer to my inquiry, if the inhabitants had any cause to complain of the British troops while in garrison here, he replied "quite the contrary, they conducted themselves very well."

The ladies were then told to retire, not however before due acknowledgment was made for the kindness they had shown; this done, the commandant said, "before we part I have an unpleasant duty to perform." A gen d'arme coming in, the door was fastened; "now" he said, "you must strip." This announcement was as unexpected as humiliating; it was confined however to the outer part of our dress. From them 47 Napoleons, 8 louis d'ors, and 47 francs in silver were taken, with some few sous in copper.

Expressing the hope that this money would at a future period be returned, he answered, "Certainly, it will be transmitted with you to Antwerp; the general commanding there will give further directions respecting it. While you are here any thing you may require, in the way of living, on your signing the bills, shall be paid for." Besides this money, some few letters, two charts, and a small pocket compass were found. Those letters had been addressed to us prisoners of war at Auxonne, the opportunity was taken of pointing out, that he could no longer doubt who and what we were, the letters with the postmarks showed the correctness of my statement. His answer was, "not at all, your government never send officers on such expeditions as I fear you have in this instance been employed on, without plenty of forged documents, those letters, as well as the postmarks on them, may be equally forged." It was evidently useless to further endeavour to persuade him that he was in error; consulting the gen d'arme for a few moments, he turned to us saying, "I scarcely know what to do with you, the prison of this place is extremely crowded

with refractory soldiers belonging to a German regiment in our service; they conduct themselves very badly; I fear if you were placed among them, particularly during the night, you would be ill treated; conceiving that you have money, they would endeavour to deprive you of it." His secretary was then sent to ascertain if the gaoler of the prison had a separate room in which we might be placed. He speedily came back, saying that there was no room to be had, but there was one on the third story of a building fronting the square, which was properly secured, and might easily be watched. The gen d'arme was directed to conduct us to it; previous to leaving the commandant he was asked how long we should have to remain in Beveland, the answer was, "that does not depend on me, I shall report you immediately to the general at Antwerp, he will give me orders as to what I am to do." With this reply the interview ended.

The new abode was but a few hundred yards from the commandant's house, and found as the secretary had described it, a place of perfect security. It had doubtless at one time served

as a prison; before the windows, which looked into the square, there were strong iron bars, the outer part of the door was plated with iron, and had strong bolts: there was a hole in the centre of about twelve inches square, with a folding door to admit the inmates' provisions. The man who had charge of this apartment was extremely civil; a good bed and fire made it a very comfortable resting place; there was constantly something to amuse us passing in the square, as the regiment to which the commandant referred was frequently exercised there. On three occasions there was a meeting of the inhabitants about noon, which we considered to be a kind of exchange. The greatest annoyance we had to endure was that of parties collecting under the windows and gazing on us; it was to be presumed we were the objects of their curiosity.

During a residence here until the 25th December, living comfortably and not expensively, an opportunity was afforded of judging how far the statement was correct of the climate of these islands being so unhealthy; there were no less than nine funerals from this square during our

short stay. The inhabitants did not seem generally in bad circumstances, and there were no beggars to be seen. The houses here are neatly constructed, their doors and windows all painted green. The dress of the men was rather of an ancient cut; the boys were habited in a similar way. The far greater part of the women, seen occasionally in the square, and who were taken to be of the middle class, wore straw bonnets of the shape of English cottage bonnets, and had long gold earrings and small bandages of gold attached in front of the hair under lace caps. Whether it was owing to the intensity of the damp and cold that they wore a profusion of petticoats, or something to set them out, we could not ascertain; they showed behind a monstrous protuberance. There were several well dressed females occasionally to be seen of a more slender and becoming appearance.

At eight o'clock in the evening of the 25th, the secretary of the commandant came to inform us that we were to proceed the following day for Antwerp, that to obviate being placed in prison at the fort of Batz, two gens d'armes might be

procured to escort us to that place at the customary rate of allowance, viz. ten francs per day. This proposition was acceded to; the gaoler's accounts for our living were brought in and signed. At ten o'clock on the morning of the 26th two gens d'armes came in a very comfortable kind of vehicle, and for which we were called upon to pay the sum of twenty francs for the day's ride.

One of our conductors, a lieutenant of that corps, being ordered to Antwerp, did not think it derogatory to replace a private and thus travel at our expense. We had not any cause to regret his company, as he was remarkably facetious and communicative. The ride to Batz was through a low country, intersected by dykes, the apertures of which were in many places filled with water. In several parts the tops of small trees were to be seen above its level.

On arriving at Batz at four o'clock, we alighted at a comfortable inn; this town seemed strongly fortified, and had about twelve months previous, been the head quarters of Lord Chatham. The hostess, a very pretty young Flemish woman, was

extremely attentive, though it was evident she did not like our conductors, as she was seen to cast at them whenever an opportunity offered, a look any thing but agreeable. Making inquiries as to the number of British troops that had been here, how they liked their quarters, if they mixed with the inhabitants, as well as a variety of questions; she said the people of Batz were very sorry to see them go away, that she and all those in her house had been treated with great civility by them, a Major N——, she added, had been extremely kind to her. On which our conductor observed, in rather a suspicious way "Ah! no doubt."

Till the hour of returning to rest, a full opportunity was afforded of talking with the lieutenant over occurrences of the period when the British expedition came before Flushing, as well as its subsequent occupation of that place and the islands contiguous. He asserted that when the armament was first seen, great uneasiness prevailed. Antwerp and different parts of the coast were wholly unprotected, the French armies being then engaged in the campaign against Austria

"there were not," he said, "300 regular troops at Antwerp, or even in its vicinity." In six days 80,000 troops of various descriptions were collected before that place, and on the coast immediately covering the Scheldt. This force, according to his statement, was composed of gens d'armes called in from the roads, gardes de forêt, national guards, veterans, and inmates of the hotel of invalids from Paris, such as were capable of serving, and who were conveyed in carts. Besides these, persons employed in the various bureaus of the administration of the different towns, were likewise compelled to augment the numbers; * "if" said he, "your troops had landed at Ostend, or in the vicinity of Newport, they would in forty eight hours have been before Antwerp, which, little fortified, must necessarily have fallen. The object of the expedition being the destruction of our fleet, it would have been effected completely, as the greater part were at that time below fort Lillo, where the line of battle ships would have had to land their guns previous to proceeding for

* I recollect having seen a similar statement in the Moniteur.

Antwerp, a work which (particularly in such a state of confusion) would have taken some days to effect, our squadron would have been destroyed, and your ships proceeding as far as Lillo, the army would have been enabled to embark with little opposition; such an operation would not have prevented the attack on Flushing, and which would, as it ultimately did, fall into your power." He described the bombardment of that place as an appalling sight, eulogising at the same time the bravery of the garrison, and the scientific defence made by General Bonêt, its commander. In answer to a question, if he really thought the British army had, during the occupation of that place, lost, as was reported, 4,000 men; he said, "certainly, and many more, what with the siege and sickness you could not have had less than 6,000 men *hors de combat;*" "there were," he added, "4,000 who died of sickness alone, and when you were at Flushing roads, you must have seen the spot where they lie. It was not owing to bad water that they died, for the greater part of the time they were here, supplies came from England; it was the damp arising from the low-

ness of the ground, the nauseous smell caused when the dykes begin to dry, which impregnates the air. A kind of vegetable matter forms at a time when the water is seen to recede from the low land between the dykes, influenced by the rays of the sun, the odour referred to results."

On retiring to rest about nine o'clock, it was found that our conductors were to occupy the same apartment with us; there were but two beds, one for myself and friend, the other for the officer. The gen d'arme had to pass the night on a chair before the fire, in order to keep watch over us. On the lieutenant taking off his coat, which it was presumed, struck the bedstead, a pistol in the pocket went off, burning a large hole in it; the inmates below hearing the report, came up in consternation, inquiring if any one had been shot. The lieutenant dismissed them in a summary way, desiring they would mind their own business, that no one was hurt. It was very near, however, having a contrary result, the ball passed underneath the chair where the gen d'arme sat, and close to his right boot, lodging in the lower part of the wainscotting

near the fireplace; many apologies were made to us for the accident by the officer; little was, however, said to the gen d'arme. The night passed tolerably well, occasionally waking, it was curious, to observe the sentry in his chair, his head nodding as if making obeisance to the fire. After a comfortable breakfast on the morning of the 27th, we embarked at nine o'clock, in the usual passage boat for Antwerp; thence to Lillo, the distance is considerable; at half-passage it came on to blow hard, and the sails were required to be double reefed. To our great amusement, and not less of that of the man at the helm, who spoke English well, our conductors became excessively sick. The lieutenant taking off his cocked hat, put on a night cap and crept under the forecastle, the gen d'arme did not follow the example, stationing himself to leeward, having occasion at intervals to place his head over the side, a loud roar followed by a deep groan, indicated his sufferings; afterwards turning his face to the wind he exclaimed "Oh Lord, I never was so ill before."

From Lillo, the Scheldt takes various turns to

Antwerp; its width there being inconsiderable, the water became smoother; on arriving opposite the fort, the lieutenant crept out of his berth, and addressing the gen d'arme said, "Oh! my God, how sick I have been," "and I likewise Mr. Lieutenant" was the reply. At two o'clock we landed on the quay at Antwerp, there were a number of vessels laying there, several displayed their flags, two of which were Americans. Traversing (under escort of the lieutenant) several fine streets, the houses in which appeared magnificent, we arrived at a building, the exterior of which denoted it to be a prison. A loud rap at the door soon brought forth the goaler; the lieutenant said "I have brought you two English prisoners, you must accommodate them with a room if you can, for which you will be paid," then turning to us he said "Gentlemen, I wish you good bye, and I trust you will soon be enabled to clear yourselves from this unpleasant affair," meaning of course, the suspicion of our having landed from a British ship

Previous to parting he was reminded of the money belonging to us, which had been put into

his charge at Beveland, the answer was "Do not fear as to that, it will be left at head quarters." Contrary to expectation, the goaler either could not or would not provide us a room separate from the other inmates under his charge. One containing eight beds, of which there was but one unoccupied, and not of the cleanest description, was our abode. The party confined here were principally Dutch seamen belonging to the men of war then in the basin of Antwerp; they had been sent into confinement for insubordination, &c. Two of these people spoke English tolerably well, a circumstance that made the time pass something more agreeably. The following morning, the 28th December, the goaler came to say we were wanted; on being conducted into his apartment, there were two officers, a captain and a lieutenant, each decorated with the riband of the Legion of Honour. They informed us that the object of their mission was to make certain inquiries touching our arrest at South Beveland. The latter then took from his pocket a bundle of papers; when opened, by a casual glance I perceived they were the depositions which

had been made before the commandant at Guise. The captain seating himself near the fire with much consequence, said "Now I expect you will answer the questions I shall put." Our names and ages being asked, were found to correspond with the former statement, on which he said, "It is all very well, now tell me, have you not a knowledge of a vessel in your service named the Emperieuse."* Replying that I had certainly heard of such a ship, but had never seen her, nor indeed any other vessel, for the period of nineteen months preceding, he said, "It is false, you have: we are aware you both landed from that ship; we know all about it." "In that case," said I, "it was useless to put such a question." The answer did not appear satisfactory. "You say," he continued, at the same time looking at the paper, "that you took a

* This frigate was for a considerable period commanded by Lord Cochrane, and stationed off the coast of France; she was well known, not only by the French fishermen, but almost every inhabitant residing near the coast, as his lordship frequently disturbed them in cutting out vessels moored under the batteries, as well as landing, destroying the guns, and occasionally carrying off the sentries.

boat to go to Beveland, pray where did you get the boat?" the reply was, that we had met with it on the beach near Phillipine, without any one on board at the time we embarked.* He inquired where she was left, and what was her number. He was told that the boat was left on the beach at Beveland, and that we had not discovered any number. On this he turned suddenly to his companion, who was occupied in recording our answers, saying, "Ah! this is always the way our fishermen act; they are invariably aiding the English in these enterprizes: how can you deny," he said, "that you are naval men, when your dress denotes as much?"† I replied, "your question is the best refutation to the charge of our being spies; that had we been engaged in such an occupation, it was natural to expect we should, as closely as possible, copy the dress of the inhabitants of the country in which our proceedings had to be car-

* Nor was there: the boat, as I have already stated, was partly aground; I and my friend got into her while the boatman, his son, and our guide got her afloat.

† We were habited in blue.

ried on." Several questions followed, touching the strength of the British fleet at that time in the North Sea, and the names of the commanders, &c. &c. He was assured that it was beyond our power to answer them. "Now," he said, "you must sign this paper," alluding to the depositions which had been taken. This we declined. Starting suddenly from his chair, and with a ferocious look, at the same time folding his arms, and distorting his features in an extraordinary manner, with shoulders raised considerably above their natural position, he came close up to me, saying, "What! not sign it?" I replied, "No Sir, we will not sign it." "Then," said he, "I will make you." The other officer then addressed an observation to him which I could not exactly hear, when this ruffianly captain passed on to the window, apparently considering how to act; turning in a few seconds, he again came up to me, and with an assumed placidity, which he conceived might probably induce us to give our signatures, he said, "Why do you object? you have nothing to fear by signing it." I repeated our former

declaration, at the same time telling him that any further effort was useless: that we would not sign any statement whatever, and our motives for refusing were, that however favourable it then was towards us, nevertheless alterations might afterwards be made to our prejudice, and form the ground of a specific charge: that we had already had enough to do, to repel the unfounded insinuation, that we landed on the island of South Beveland in the character of spies.

During these discussions my companion who had all the time listened with great attention, indignant at the ruffianly conduct of this fellow, now said, "Do not let him have it all his own way." The advice was not unheeded. "You come sir," I said, "doubtless by orders from the general commanding to make these inquiries, and to which we have replied in the best manner in our power, but the general did not tell you to insult us. You have thought proper to act, no doubt for the purpose of intimidation, in a manner which I am sure he would not countenance." His passion having now subsided, in a mild tone

he said, " I have not insulted you, all I want is, that you sign these statements." I told him he had done every thing but strike, that his government would not permit the prisoner of war to be unnecessarily insulted or abused; even the Emperor himself discountenanced such proceedings, as was to be seen in an order of the day, issued at Salamanca, 1809, and to this effect: " I order that the English prisoners shall be treated with the humanity which characterizes a brave and generous people." How far you have acted towards us in accordance with that injunction, the minister of war shall have an opportunity of deciding, a few days march will bring us to Vallenciennes, a memorial shall then be drawn up, setting forth all that has now occurred. " Where is the bravery," I inquired, " in treating persons in the way you have treated us." As for your threat that we shall be tried by a military tribunal as spies, it is all nonsense, you cannot make us what we are not, besides you should recollect that there are 75,000 French prisoners in England." At this observation he said, " I see you are going to insult me, be careful what you

say, or I will order you into irons." I have no doubt of your power to do so, I said, nor will it be the first time that I have been in them, a treatment which no civilized government would show towards a prisoner of war. My companion observing that I had better not go too far, put an end to the discussion. The captain then taking up his hat, said to the gaoler, "you may lock them up again." On returning to our abode, we began to reflect if any expression had escaped, calculated to make our situation still more uncomfortable. There was no doubt the individual who had just quitted would feel pleased in adding to our annoyance, and we came to the decision that in any future examinations, to pass unheeded both the language and the treatment that we might have to contend with.*

On the morning of the 29th we were again summoned to the gaoler's room; there were two persons, one habited in undress uniform, the other in Bourgois, waiting; the latter spoke English perfectly, and unlike the previous visitors, they

* We were afterwards told this valiant captain was a Belgian, in the French service.

were civil. The depositions from Beveland, as likewise those taken here, were brought for our signatures; the person who spoke English, said, "Have you any thing to add to what is here written," replying that we had not seen the contents of those papers, he said, "then I will read them." To this no objection was offered, afterwards he said, "now do me the favour to sign them;" "I see then," he said, "you are inflexible, I am sorry for it; be assured you are acting contrary to your own interest." Apologising for differing from his opinion, I inquired whether the minister of war had been written to on our account, "Yes," he said, "some days since, and I should think an answer will be here to-night or to-morrow." "Then" I observed, "it cannot but be favourable to us, as the commandant at Auxonne would transmit our descriptions to the minister immediately after the escape, they would necessarily be sent here." "I hope it may be as you state," was his reply; "in a contrary case, and I am sorry to say it, your position will become an aukward one." He was told we were greatly annoyed at the repetition of

the story respecting our having landed from a British man of war; "but you have been taken" he observed, "on an island, under very suspicious circumstances, and you cannot be surprised at being severely dealt with." Pointing out that letters had been found upon us, addressed to Auxonne, as likewise the chart by which the route we had taken was defined; he said, "they go for nothing, I am sorry you cannot be prevailed upon to sign these depositions." About to retire, we thanked him for his civility, so opposite to that of the officers who had been sent to us on the 28th. "Ah! by the bye," he said, "one of them is in great anger, he says he was grossly insulted." "In such case," I answered, "I must be the person he alluded to, as my friend was silent during the interview. The insult came from him, he did every thing but lay violent hands on me; his object, no doubt, was to alarm us, and by such means force a statement to our disadvantage." "All I know is," he said, "that he has furnished a written account of all that passed, which has been sent to a great personage here, and what the result will be, I cannot tell."

News from Paris was anxiously looked for; it did not arrive till the 31st. In the afternoon, a Maréchal de Logis of Gendarmerie, accompanied by a person having the appearance of a secretary to some of the authorities, came to the prison. The gaoler for the third time conducted us to his apartment; the presumed secretary, inquiring our names, ages, &c. drew from his pocket a large letter, which had the appearance of a ministerial despatch. Looking attentively at us a few seconds, he turned to the Maréchal de Logis, saying, "it is quite true, they are the persons here described." Great was the joy at this announcement, the term of spy being no longer applicable to us; and it was to be desired that the ruffianly captain, of whose conduct I have already spoken, was now here to witness the aquittal. On inquiring when we were to be removed from this prison, we were told that the correspondence* did not leave until

* There were certain days appointed for conducting the prisoners of all grades to the towns or places from which they had deserted, as likewise those who had to be transferred for trial or offences. The gen d'armes were seen to meet half way between their respective stations, and exchange their prisoners. This was called travelling by correspondence.

the 4th January. Anxious to quit, the Maréchal de Logis was asked if an escort could be obtained to conduct us to Valenciennes, for which, as well as a carriage, the customary allowance would be paid. The answer was, "I think it can." At 7 o'clock he came to say that we might have two gens d'armes to Valenciennes, that the pay being 10 francs per day, exclusive of the living, and the journey three days, the whole expense, including the vehicle, would be 100 francs. There was evidently extortion in this proposition. It was however advisable to yield, rather than remain four days in this filthy gaol.

CHAPTER V.

ARRIVAL AT VALENCIENNES——OCCURRENCES IN THE TOWN PRISON OF THAT PLACE——A SECOND VISIT TO CAMBRAI ——MARCH FROM THENCE, WITH OCCURRENCES ON THE ROAD——ARRIVAL AT AUXONNE——RECEPTION THERE.

At 8 a.m. on the 1st January, 1812, the journey commenced. The carriage procured by the gens d'armes was an open one, and the weather being very cold, the journey consequently was any thing but comfortable. The route was by Malines, Brussels, and Mons, to Valenciennes.

Nothing remarkable occurred during these three days; our conductors, although civil, were unremitting in the watch kept upon us; as in the instance at the fort of Batz, each night they occupied the same room with us, alternately keeping watch. At half-past 4 p.m. of the 3rd, we arrived at the town prison of Valenciennes. After settling accounts with these conductors, and seeing that they delivered over to the gaoler the money which

had been taken from us, they politely wished us good night and a pleasant journey.

There were, according to report, between 1000 and 2000 English prisoners at Valenciennes confined in the citadel, and likewise several gentlemen on parole in the town. A clean and comfortable room was procured in the gaoler's house with good beds, luxuries to which we had been some time strangers. Soon after arriving, an English servant in livery, came with Lord Barrington's compliments, requesting our names, and to know where we had been taken. Soon after answering these inquiries, his lordship again sent to say that he would be glad of our company to dine with him the following day. Whether it was an expression of his lordship's, or merely of his servant, we did not ascertain; but we were amused by the invitation being accompanied with the hope that we had no previous engagement. Soon afterwards a visit was paid by Mr. Slack, likewise an inmate of this prison. The following day several gentlemen on parole in the town came to see us, desirous of having full particulars as to our attempt at escape, and the cause of its failure.

His lordship likewise did us the honor of a visit on that day; in conversation he communicated a piece of intelligence, which had it not appeared in the Moniteur, could not by possibility be credited. It was that of a decree inserted in that paper a few days after our escape from Auxonne, a translation of which I subjoin.

"*Napoleon, by the grace of God and the Constitutions of the Empire, Emperor of the French and King of Italy, Protector of the Confederation of the Rhine, and Mediator of the Swiss Confederation, &c. &c. &c.*

"*On the report of our ministers of war and of marine we have decreed, and do decree as follows: viz.—*

"*The act of the republic is in full force against all prisoners of war who shall be found guilty of desertion.*

ACT.

"*Any prisoner of war taken by the armies of the republic, who shall leave the place of his residence without legal permission, if retaken shall be condemned to six years irons.*

"*Our ministers of war and of marine are*

charged with the execution of the present, which shall be inserted in the bulletin of laws.

(Signed)

" *By the Emperor* NAPOLEON.

" *The Secretary Counseller of State,*

(Signed) DARU."

This infamous document was dated on the 13th December, 1811, but nine days after our departure from Auxonne. The sensation caused by it in the different depôts may readily be conceived; although it did not apply to myself and companion, it was evident the wrath of the government was excited, and the offence (for such it was termed) which we had committed, would meet with more than the ordinary duration of confinement. After dinner at his lordship's (the guests were all English) the decree in question formed the principal topic of conversation, the situation in which the prisoners were placed by this, not only unexpected, but likewise unparalleled announcement, every one seemed to think as most precarious; some thought it impossible that Napoleon would dare (seeing the great number of French prisoners at this time in England) to act

with so much barbarity; the war was about to assume a new character when those in captivity were to be dealt with as malefactors, and punished with a severity, which usually expiates crimes of the worst description committed by French subjects. How far attempts were made to put in execution this abominable law, will appear at a subsequent part of my narrative. During our confinement here, an Englishman was brought in and placed with the French deserters in the court yard. On ascertaining this, an application was made to the gaoler to allow his coming for a short time into our room. On inquiring how he had come to France, the answer was any thing but satisfactory; he represented that he had left London but a fortnight preceding, and having landed at Rotterdam without a passport, was arrested, and thrown into the prison of that place.

We endeavoured to learn his motive in leaving England for a country situated as France then was; he said that an awkward affair had been the cause of it. There was evidently a desire on his part to conceal the precise nature of the business to which he alluded; the gaoler on being requested,

brought in refreshment, of which he seemed to partake with great zest, deprived as he had been of nourishment for several days, save the allowance of the prisons through which he had passed.

In his case, likewise, the money found upon him at the moment of his arrest, had been taken; when told that ours was in the hands of the gaoler, to be passed on with us, his fears as to the fate of his own subsided. To this stranger I shall have hereafter to allude.

Residing at Valenciennes till the 10th January, receiving kindnesses and attentions from Lord Barrington, Mr. Slack, and several gentlemen residing in the town, we came to the decision of proceeding once more to Auxonne, contrary to the advice of these gentlemen, who were desirous that we should remain during the winter at Valenciennes. A gen d'arme was hired for our escort to Combrai. The distance to Auxonne and thence to the fortress of Bitche, was computed to be not less than from 560 to 580 miles; a stay during the winter here would not have prevented a further confinement in that fortress, the sooner that destination was reached, the sooner necessarily

would be our removal from it. This consideration alone induced us to forego the society we had here enjoyed, as well as the rest it afforded.*

At four o'clock in the afternoon a gen d'arme came with a fiacre to conduct us to Cambrai; when about to leave the gaol, he produced a pair of handcuffs, asserting he would not take charge of us without using them, as we were recommended to the particular attention of our conductors. To pay for escort, and to be subjected to such treatment, could not be endured; rather than proceed he was told that we would remain, and wait the first removal of prisoners to Cambrai, as even then we could only be conducted with these elegant appendages: seeing this determination, and not wishing to lose the opportunity of making a few francs, he said, "if you will give me your words of honour that you will not attempt to escape, I will take you without them." The proposition was complied with, and after an

* A few months after our leaving Valenciennes, I learned with deep regret that Lord Barrington and Mr. Slack died in that prison. It was said their deaths were to be attributed to some contagious disease which made its appearance, in the first instance, with the French inmates.

uninteresting ride, I arrived once more at the gate of the citadel of that place at a little after eight o'clock in the evening. While knocking for admission, I could not but reflect on the scenes through which I had passed during a twelve months' absence from this depôt. At eight o'clock the prisoners retired to rest, there was not a light perceptible in any window of the barracks; never did the citadel appear to me more desolate.* In the yard there was a small prison in which the French deserters passing through were usually confined. On entering the gaoler's room, the gen d'arme pointing to me, said in a facetious way, "I have brought you

* In 1824, when visiting the north of France, I passed through Cambrai; desirous of seeing the citadel and when about to enter the gate, the sentry refused to let me pass. How great was the change! I need scarcely say, the time had been when liberty was refused me to leave it. To an officer passing at the time, I stated my desire to walk through, having years previous been a prisoner of war there; he immediately directed a corporal to conduct me. I recognized my name, as well as those of many who were then with me in 1809, still standing on the stone chimney piece of the room in which we had been placed. It was the general practice of the prisoners to record their names wherever they were confined.

an old friend," "Oh yes," he replied, "I recollect him very well, he was here last year." Anxious to see former companions, I endeavoured to persuade the gaoler to announce my arrival to them. "It is quite impossible," he said, "they are all asleep long ago." After a good deal of solicitation I prevailed upon him to fetch Monsieur Maniquet, the secretary of the commandant, who immediately came: great was his astonishment to see me re-appear at this depôt. Inquiring how the Baron de Dalmont was, he said he had left some time previous to take a command in the armies in Spain. It appeared that in my absence many changes had taken place, the greater part owing to the removal of that officer. The then commandant was a lieutenant of gen d'armerie, and exceedingly disliked. My visitor was asked if he thought the decree of the 13th December would be put in force, "I have no doubt whatever of it," he replied, "and it is a very fortunate circumstance for you and your friend that your attempt preceded it." Expressing the hope that the following morning we might be permitted to walk freely in the citadel yard, to converse with old

acquaintances, more particularly that I might see the sailors who had been taken with me, I was given to understand such permission was impossible, and moreover, that we should have to proceed immediately on the journey.

"The commandant has orders," said my friend, "to send forward all prisoners not destined to remain here, without allowing any communication between them and the depôt. I now inquired if he would do me the favour to see us away on the following morning, and to persuade, if possible, the gens d'armes not to place us in handcuffs. "Certainly," he said, "I will come and see you off, and will prevent it if I can, yet that will entirely depend as to whether I happen to know the gens d'armes who are to be the escort. It is a pity," he added, "that you attempted to escape, you will be looked upon with suspicion for the remainder of the time you are in this country.

Monsieur Maniquet had, on many occasions, during my former residence, acted with great kindness to me; I believe it was principally owing to him that my application to the Minister of War, to be allowed parole in the town, was

so speedily granted, as he induced the Baron de Dalmont to speak favourably of me to the Minister, without having necessary time to ascertain whether I was or was not likely to respect the favour sought. Whenever I had an opportunity of thanking this gentleman, his reply invariably was, "Not at all, my dear Sir; I am sure you would do as much for me, if I were a prisoner in your country." It is with pleasure I record favours shown, and at a period too, when the least disposition at all approximating to them, on the part of a Frenchman towards an English prisoner of war, being viewed with suspicion, they became necessarily more valuable.*

According to promise, Monsieur Maniquet came to see us depart: the gens d'armes, at his particular solicitation, allowed us to walk without being attached to twenty-five unfortunate French deserters conducted by them. They were also civil during the day's journey, doubtless owing

* I frequently remarked, during my residence at Auxonne, that French people of both sexes, who within doors were most pleasing and agreeable, would pass us in the street in a very distant manner. The motive may be conjectured.

to this intercession. A little after three o'clock we arrived at St. Quintin: the route was precisely the same as that of the preceding twelve months, the difference in my position however as regarded liberty of movement was great; then I was on parole, and now conducted under escort as a deserter. Particular description of the gaols into which we were thrown during the whole of this dreary march, I shall avoid, fearful that my representation, as regards their filth and humidity, may appear to want confirmation. To those who peruse my narrative, whose fate it was to be prisoners in France at the period on which I write, it is unnecessary to enter into detail; I would rather avoid recalling scenes long passed, the recollection of which can but give rise to painful recollections.

From the 11th January to the 9th February, twenty-nine days, which brought us to Auxonne, the time was spent marching, and in confinement in the various prisons on the road. Although frequent endeavours were made to procure gens d'armes and a conveyance to pass on more quickly, they were unavailing. This was attri-

butable to an order given by the commandant at Cambrai, pointing out the particular mode of treatment to be observed towards us, while on the march. There were fortunately but three occasions on which we had to travel in handcuffs, during the whole of the way. Those were from Leon to Corbeney, thence to Rheims, and from Vitry le Français to St. Dizier. The weather during nearly the whole of the time, was favourable; had snow fallen, as on my former march, twelve months previous, having to rest in cold gaols, we should have been compelled, before bringing the journey to a conclusion, to seek refuge in an hospital.

While in the prison at Langres, six captains and mates of merchantmen joined us; they were likewise going to Auxonne · It may be considered a poor compliment to them when I assert, that never was an arrival more agreeable: they had been recently taken, two were absent but six weeks from England They were surprised, and not less pleased, at thus unexpectedly meeting two of their countrymen. Not one of the party spoke French, they had consequently been

unable to obtain beds or refreshments, except at exhorbitant rates, putting up with the gaol allowance during the greater part of their long march from the coast. One of these persons had preserved two English newspapers. They furnished to my companion and myself the means of passing the hours very agreeably. It was impossible they could be too often read, as at each perusal they appeared to contain fresh news. These repeated readings afforded our new acquaintances considerable mirth.

The recital of occurrences in England gathered from our friends served to beguile the loneliness of confinement and made the remainder of the journey pass off lightly. At Dijon, on entering the town prison, we were astonished to meet with twelve captains and mates of merchantmen who had attempted to escape from Auxonne after the appearance of the decree already named. They were waiting trial before the military tribunals; our escape from Auxonne had, it appeared, highly incensed the commandant Monsieur Bertrand; nine others got out of the town the same night, and he suspected we had gone together. During

our stay in this place, a sight occurred of the most unpleasant kind: two Spanish soldiers convicted of the murder of a gen d'arme, were brought out for execution. They had been a long time confined in a cell under ground, and were heavily ironed. Several gens d'armes came to conduct them to the place of execution. On being led into the prison yard, they refused to accompany their conductors unless a glass of brandy was given, in which to drink the health of Ferdinand the 7th. The priest attending, did all he could to induce them to submit to their fate, neither the threats of the gens d'armes, nor the swords and pistols which were frequently pointed at these miserable men, had the effect to alter their determination; brandy was at length brought, and the respect paid to their monarch, shaking hands with several Spanish officers, who were likewise here, they quietly departed. They were exceedingly fine young men. This was the only instance in which I had been in a gaol (as far as I could ascertain) where there were persons waiting execution. At Valenciennes, however, there was a man ap-

parently a countryman, about to be tried, having shot a priest in a chapel in some part of Belgium.*

On the morning of the 3rd February, we left Dijon for Auxonne, three friends there had been written to, announcing our intended arrival: though regretting the unfortunate issue of the enterprise, they were glad to perceive we had not materially suffered from the fatigue by which it had been attended. When lodged in the town prison, the history of our adventures had to be frequently repeated to the numerous visitors who kindly repaired there. Although the families with whom we had resided were not of the number, they instantly, and indeed during the entire of our stay, furnished our daily fare, adding supplies of the best wine the place afforded—kindness shown at such a crisis can never escape my recollection.

The day after our return two gens d'armes came to conduct us to the commandant, a visit not unexpected. He was sitting in his Bureau along with an interpreter. After regarding us attentively

* I frequently remarked the levity of this man during the hours he was allowed to pace the prison yard.

for a few minutes, he inquired how we had contrived to escape from the town; replying that the walls were scaled, and without assistance, he said, "what, do you mean to tell me you did not pass through the gate in disguise," answering in the negative, he asked, "pray what part of the rampart did you get over, was there not a sentry near where you got out?" Telling him there was a sentry within a few yards, but it was impossible he could see us, as it rained heavily, and the night was extremely dark, he observed, "it was well indeed he did not see you; what induced you to desert?" the reply was a ready one, viz. to get out of captivity, at the same time adding, that as liberty in the depôt was considerably curtailed, and compelled to attend three musters in the day, beyond these, permission to go out after dark being withdrawn, he could not expect that persons thus situated would remain at Auxonne, more particularly as we had been long threatened with a close confinement to a fort or citadel. To this he answered, "you had every liberty you had a right to expect." He then inquired if I had not been much longer in

the depôt than my companion? Replying affirmatively, he said, "you must then have induced him to desert." My friend here stepped forward, and told him *he* required no inducement, that the moment the liberty was curtailed, he came to the determination to quit. "I am aware," said the commandant, "that M. de Bross gave you on many occasions liberty to visit the country for some distance; he was foolish for doing so." I told him that M. de Bross visited the family with whom I resided, and necessarily knew me, that he never refused an extension of liberty when he had the power to grant it; that during his command I, as well as others of my countrymen, had been absent for a period of two or three days, even going so far as St. Jean Delone down the river, likewise beyond the town of Dole, on the Besançon road, and that those indulgences had never been abused. "Ah! he gave you all too much liberty," was his reply. To this opinion I begged leave to differ, telling him, that had equal liberty been allowed after that officer's departure, neither I nor my friend would have made an attempt to escape.

Further inquiries followed, viz. by what conveyance we had travelled, how the boat was procured which took us to South Beveland, and whether a guide had not undertaken to conduct us to the coast; the answers being given in an evasive manner, seemed to displease him so much, that he directed the gen d'arme to re-conduct us to the town prison.

The long anticipated removal of the depôt* was now consummated; the place selected was the town of Longwy, a small though strongly fortified place in the department of the Moselle, and but a short distance from the city of Metz. The first detachment was ordered to move on the 18th February; in the interim the Minister of War's instructions arrived to consign my friend and self to the fortress of Bitche, which being in the same department as Longwy, we were to leave with the detachment above mentioned.

Our French friends who thus far had confined

* It appeared that the prisoners were not removed from Auxonne, owing to frequent desertions. A camp was to be formed near that place it was reported of thirty thousand men. This force formed one of the corps of the grande armée which afterwards entered Russia.

their attentions to inquiries, and supplying our wants, now came to visit us. It appeared they had an objection to do so immediately on our arrival, and until the decision of the government was known, as to whether we were once more to have the liberty, such as it was, of Auxonne, or be finally removed.

CHAPTER VI.

MARCH FROM AUXONNE TO METZ——SEPARATION FROM OUR COUNTRYMEN THERE——JOURNEY THENCE TO BITCHE——DESCRIPTION THEREOF, AND PARTICULARS OF THE TREATMENT OBSERVED TOWARDS THOSE CONFINED IN IT.

On the morning of the 18th, the journey commenced in company with about 250 of the prisoners; the route was by Dijon, Langres, Clefmont, Neufchatel, Toul, Nancy, Pont à Mousson, and Metz, at which place we were to separate from them. Nothing remarkable or interesting occurred during the whole of the march. In some towns our companions were billeted on the inhabitants, in others they were consigned to gaols with us: we were particularly marked as objects of attention to our conductors, having deserted and being destined to a depôt of punishment.*

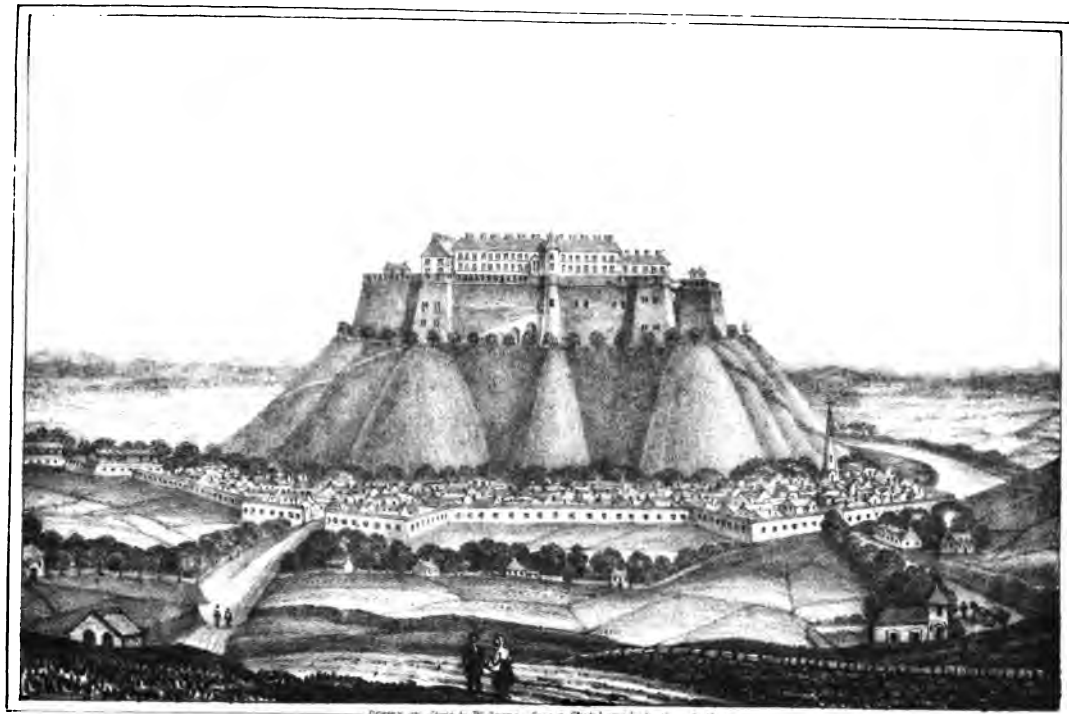
* Passing through the town of Nancy, where a depôt of Spanish officers had been some time established, the celebrated general Palafox, whose defence of Saragossa can never be forgotten, was pointed out to us: he was in a very debilitated state of health. At this place Sir Wm. Cooper

The 26th February separated us from the detachment, when we were consigned to the town prison of Metz; on the following morning the hand-cuffs were once more used, and after a tedious walk we arrived at Sarreguimiennes, but one day's march of the fortress in which a long confinement was to be anticipated; two gens d'armes were here hired in order to bring this wearisome travelling to a conclusion. Passing by a rough road and over a poor country, we reached that celebrated fort somewhat about three o'clock in the afternoon. Before proceeding to give a minute account of treatment all persons sent here were compelled to submit to, the reader should be informed that Bitche was selected in the early part of 1806, as a place better adapted than any other in France for the safe keeping of the prisoner of war who had attempted to extricate himself from a captivity, from which, at that time, there appeared no hope of a termination.

and a relative of his, sent to know if we stood in need of pecuniary assistance. Here was a truly English feeling and which I record with pleasure. Finding that we did not require it, they nevertheless sent in dinner and wine during the three days my friend and myself had to remain here.

England, unlike France, is not studded with garrison towns, the system of our goverment at this period, was to place the French prisoners, making similar attempts, on board prison ships; the confinement in which, severe as it might be, nevertheless enabled the inmates to sleep in pure air, and having permission to pace the deck during the day, they could observe all passing around them. Had the French Government been disposed to follow a similar system of punishing desertion, they had not the means of adopting it, as it was well known, there was scarcely a port on their coast before which British men of war were not constantly seen cruizing. Frequent instances occured where the ports were attacked, and ships destroyed, if not in, immediately at their entrance. The glorious affair of Basque Roads furnishes the proof why the French government could not consider the English prisoners safe afloat, and thus prefered placing them in forts and citadels.

Of all the fortifications in France, there is none whose situation and formation appears so extraordinary as the fort of which I am about



Drawn on Stone by W. Evans, from a Sketch made by the Author.

FORT OF BITCHE.

From the Metz Road

give a faithful and I trust not an uninteresting description. When seen from the Metz road, it is scarcely possible to conceive that a confinement here could be so terrible as that which I am about to report. The town built at the foot of the mountain on which the fort is situated, has nothing to recommend it, the houses being generally small, and rudely constructed. The streets (of which there are but two, one running parallel with the side of the mountain, and the other leading from its centre to the road to Sarreguimiennes) are narrow and badly paved. The language here spoken is low German, nor are the inhabitants less boorish in their manner than those of the worst of the low countries. The land round is exceedingly barren, the beet-root being the principal vegetable grown, being cultivated in considerable quantity, for the purpose of extracting sugar from; this with potatoes, and the commoner kind of vegetables, form the only productions. There are very few fields of corn, wheat, or other grain to be seen for miles round.

The entire of the fort is hewn from a rock;

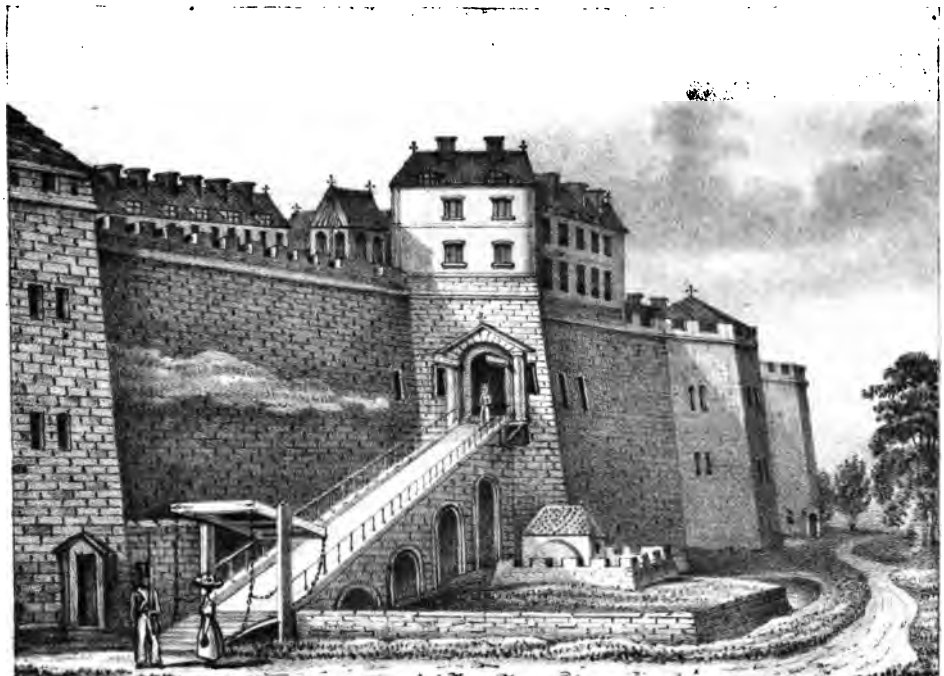
it is asserted that the mountain previous to the fort's being constructed, was in form as a sugar loaf; the spire levelled, the outer part of the fort was excavated to the parapet. So perpendicular is the mountain, that directly in rear of the town, the fortifications cannot be seen. To the right there is a winding footpath; the main road commences in rear of the left of the mountain, passing by a considerable ascent to the right, it terminates at the drawbridge represented in the annexed plate: the river immediately beyond the town is the Swolbé. The expense of constructing this extraordinary fortification must indeed have been immense. If true as reported, that on the minister of finance applying to Louis XIV. (in whose reign, I believe, it was built,) for further supplies for its completion, that monarch inquired if they were building the fort of Bitche with crown pieces.

The sides of the mountain are wrought in angles and half circles, in order that the guns from the bastions may play upon an enemy collecting under it, previous to attack. Although formed from the rock, a well built wall cases

the whole height of the fort, with one exception, where it is seen to protrude on that part near the main bridge. For what purpose it is thus left, as if in an unfinished state, I had no means of ascertaining. On arriving at the glacis, which forms a pleasant promenade, being planted with trees, the outer walls appear to be about 180 to 200 feet high. A few yards from them is a ditch in depth about 50 or 60 feet. A small battery immediately at the foot of the upper draw-bridge, commands the entire of the glacis. Those parts separated from the main body of the fort, and over which there are bridges, are termed the têtes, or heads; the one to the left, the grosse tête, where there is a single house, served as a prison for the disorderly soldiers of the garrison, as well as the prisoners becoming refractory. That on the right was the residence of the officer of gen d'armes, under whose immediate authority we were. At the extremity of the main bridge, a tunnel of about 150 yards passes under the buildings occupied by the general commanding the fort, and the

officers of the etât major. The main guard-house faces this passage, and before it two field pieces were constantly placed. Turning thence to the left, passing under the arch-way of a building used as a store house, we were brought into the court immediately in front of the general's residence; here a wooden barricade, extending from the chapel wall to the right wing of the lower barrack, marked the boundary of the prisoners' walk. At the door of this barricade, which only admitted one person at a time, a sentry was posted; passing thence, and coming into the yard, a plate of which is here given, our unfortunate fellow captives were to be seen —beyond them, there was nothing to gaze upon save the front walls of the buildings and the sky. Contrary to expectation, the ramparts were too high to admit of any view beyond them. Such was the lonely appearance of the court-yard of the fort of Bitche.

In this confined space there were several Englishmen who had endured a confinement of five and six years. Friends came forward with whom I had been previously acquainted in different



Drawn on Stone by W. Crane, from a Sketch made by the Author

ENTRANCE TO THE FORT OF BITCHE,

Taken from the Fosse

depôts; like myself unsuccessful in their attempts to escape, and they were now suffering the penalty. The number of Englishmen at this time here amounted to about 300, and the garrison, composed of veterans, to 400 men. Eight rooms had been opened in one of the barracks, each containing sixteen of the prisoners, whose long confinement and good conduct merited the indulgence of a separation from the seamen, as well as others confined in the *souterrains* immediately under the barracks. These abodes are hewn from the rock, and 29 feet from the surface of the pavement in the court yard. The light was admitted obliquely through small windows, with strong iron bars, on a level with the pavement; they were cold and uncomfortable abodes, although frequently white-washed, and fires kept in them during the day, the water nevertheless oozed through the pores of the rock; the damp was consequently, in the winter months, excessive. Previous to the period of which I write, the prisoners first visit to this place was attended with formalities quite as unpleasant as those to which persons are subjected when, for the first time, crossing the line.

On the establishment of the depôt it was of little importance as to the respectability of the party coming here; he was sure to be confounded with characters of the worst description. Although intended that persons who had attempted to escape alone should be confined here, many were seen to arrive from the different depôts whom it had been impossible to keep under control. Of the entire number thus confined two-thirds were composed of seamen, principally of the navy. When with (as they termed it) too much grog on board, rioting, drunkenness, and fighting, were carried on to an extent, that a residence in these vaulted cellars was scarcely to be borne. No longer under restraint, the sailor seemed to consider he was on an equality with those whom, when at sea, he would not dare to disobey.

A strong spirit denominated *Snique*, extracted as it was said from potatoes, and generally used by the inhabitants, was exceedingly cheap, a tumbler glass costing but two sous; owing to this, particularly on the pay days, scenes occurred of which it would be in vain to give an adequate description. Sleep, for nights together, could

not be obtained. When the sailor arrived at Bitche, if he had the appearance of a boxer, his prowess was soon tried; there were several scientific pugilists among them, and fights of the most determined character frequently took place in the *souterrains*. The larger one usually contained 140 to 160, and the smaller 80 to 100 persons; there were likewise a few confined in a vaulted cellar, which the prisoners denominated St. Giles. The beds were placed on boarded platforms, raised a few feet from the floor. The inmates were locked up in this solitary place from seven in the evening until the same hour in the morning during the summer, and from four in the afternoon to eight in the morning during winter months. To make the confinement more severe, those allotted to the abodes alluded to were further shut up from twelve to one in the day

The officer commanding the fort had the rank of general of brigade; the custody of the prisoners was committed to a lieutenant of gen d'armerie. The former, general Newhouse Maisonneuve, an Alsacien by birth, had lost his

right arm, it was said, in an action with the British troops in India. He was advanced in years, positive and ignorant; speaking French indifferently, and with a strong German accent, he appeared to consider that the object of keeping the prisoner in perfect security, would warrant any act, however great the severity accompanying it. The lieutenant, Mr. Oliver, though an exceedingly passionate man, at one time appeared disposed to lighten the weight of our captivity, when he thought indulgences might be granted without fear of abuse; the opposite conduct of the general thwarted such intention; it seemed as if this old man had taken for his motto, "I have you and I will keep you." Thus we had to bear with annoyances the reader will scarcely credit.

Through the medium of a friend stationed in one of the rooms, my companion and myself were allowed to pass the night of our arrival with him, permission being given by the officer in command. On the following morning, the 29th February, 1812, according to custom, an appearance had to be made before the commandant. A vacancy had occurred in

the room spoken of; on applying for leave to occupy it, he said that he had no objection, and that he hoped our conduct would be such as to merit the indulgence. A residence in the souterrains and the torments inseparable from it, were thus happily avoided.

To prevent the possibility of a want of accuracy appearing in the statement of occurrences which came under my observation, from the 28th February 1812, to the 3d October, 1814, a period of two years and seven months, in which I had the misfortune to be closely confined here, I subjoin the names of several of my countrymen, who were at this time incarcerated with me; it will be for them to state whether I have not faithfully represented the situation in which we were during this close and rigorous captivity.

OF THE ARMY.

Lieutenant-General Murry,
Lieutenant-Colonel William Whaley,
Lieutenant L'Estrange, 71st regiment,
Lieutenant Letoller, 83d ditto,
Lieutenant Egan, R. A. Corps,
Lieutenant Dewolmer, K. G. Legion.

OF THE NAVY.

Lieut. W. C. Jervoice, Lieut. Tracey,
" William Scanlan, " Miller,
" Allen Stewart, Surgeons Bell,
" J. Jackson, " Abbot,
" Whitehurst, " Patterson,

MIDSHIPMEN.

J. P. Campbell —— Worth,
—— Rosser, —— Colquhoun,
H. Leworthy, —— Grant,
George Blake, —— James,
P. Morris, —— Wymer,
J. Herbert, —— Marriott.
—— Magrath, —— Kirkpatrick

PURSERS.

Mackay, Herd, Cummings,

OF THE MERCHANT SERVICE, DETENUS, AND PASSENGERS.

Mr. Throgmorton, Mr. Nicol,
" Melville, " Carr,
" Matley, " Miller,
" Dutton, " Jackson,
" J. Bishop, " Waters,
" J. Bailey, " T. Hales,

Mr. Hurst,	Mr. Goutier,
" Whiteway,	" Shaw,
" Dodds,	" Thompson,
" Hargrave,	" Allanson,
" Clarke,	" Allison,
" Anderson,	" Smith,
" Langley,	" Rowlandson,
" Tapley,	" Robertson.

A week had scarcely passed after my arrival when a melancholy occurrence took place, casting a gloom over the inmates of Bitche. About three o'clock in the afternoon, a midshipman, named Mr. Thompson, one of the finest young men in the fort, was casually passing to the barrier, at the entrance of the court-yard, where the towns' people were permitted to offer fruit and vegetables for sale, under the immediate eye of the sentry, one person only being permitted to pass the gate at a time. Two soldiers of the garrison, off guard, had just come through the passage, when one, in a state of intoxication, turning abruptly to Thompson, used an expression not uncommon with them, viz:—To h—l with king George—to h—ll with the English.

Our companion speedily returned the compliment, using similar expressions towards Napoleon, and those who had the happiness, as it was usually termed, to live under him. The soldier then made a blow at our friend; being a good pugilist, it was not only parried, but returned with an effect which brought the pot-valiant soldier to the ground. The sentry seeing the occurrence, came deliberately from his post, a distance of several yards, and bringing his musket to a charge, stabbed Thompson in the abdomen. He fell almost instantly; not however before striking the sentry in the face. I was, at the moment, leaning against the wall of the well near the chapel, and but a very few feet from where the unhappy occurrence took place. I afterwards observed the sentry coolly wipe the point of the bayonet with the sleeve of his coat, at the same time using some expressions which I could not exactly hear, and then returned to his post. The sailors, of whom there were many at the moment in the court-yard, instantly rendered assistance, and carried their countryman to a room on the ground floor of the barrack, though but a few

moments had transpired, on reaching the room he was dead.

The general had a dinner party on that day: hearing of the affair he came, without his hat, accompanied by several of his guests, into the court-yard, stopping but a few moments to speak to the sentry as he passed. The prisoners were now seen issuing from the rooms and the souterrains: the occurrence appeared as a dream to all. Thompson had but a very short time before quitted the souterrain. He was a great favourite of the sailors. Expressions of indignation were used, in the hearing of the general, by several, and some were imprudent enough to declare they would be revenged on the sentry. In the midst of the confusion, the general and his companions thought proper to retire; the drums immediately beat, the troops formed in front of the barracks, and the prisoners were ordered to their respective rooms.

The general then re-appeared, accompanied by the commandant, and addressed such as were seen looking through the room windows, at the same time drawing his sword with a flourish, he de-

clared that if any one used the word "revenge," or any expression calculated to excite the prisoners to insurrection, he would take such person and try him by a court-martial, carrying the sentence into execution within twenty-four hours; a threat, of which there could be little doubt, he would have felt no reluctance to act upon. After remaining some time under arms the troops were dismissed, and we were debarred permission to walk in the court-yard for the remainder of the day. The body placed on a bier was carried to the hospital of the town by four sailors, under escort of three gen d'armes. The following day several midshipmen and sailors were, on application, allowed to attend the funeral; the latter dressed in blue jackets and white trousers, with crape on their straw hats, the former in uniform, with crape round the arm, had an interesting appearance.

Our departed friend was borne to the grave by the seamen. The spot selected for the interment of the prisoners who died in the fort, was at the junction of two cross roads, a distance of about a quarter of a mile from the town

gate. The funeral was seen from the upper windows of the barracks.* The guard was composed of soldiers of the garrison and a few gens d'armes; and previous to leaving the fort, their muskets were loaded in the presence of the party they had to conduct. A memorial setting forth the particulars of this affair was drawn out to be forwarded to the minister of war. It had however to pass the hands of the authorities. Whether it was not forwarded, or the statement by which, it is presumed, it would be accompanied, on the part of those persons, giving a different version of the transaction, or otherwise, could not be ascertained, it remained without any apparent notice from his excellency.

Occasionally the inhabitants, through curiosity, would come into the fort, conducting persons considered to be strangers or residing a little beyond the town, for the purpose of inspecting the apartments allotted to us. They were in most

* Several of the sailors who could get but a distant view of the procession, as it proceeded to the burial ground, showed signs how deeply they felt the loss of poor Thompson, who was, according to their declaration, the best fellow, as an officer, placed among them, in the souterrain.

cases attended by a subaltern officer; sometimes the English would attend, if the party appeared to be respectable, for the purpose of explaining or giving information touching our confinement. An opportunity was afforded on one of these visits, (when several ladies came, and in reply to a question from them, if they could in any way be of service to us,) to forward a letter to the Minister of War, in which the murder alluded to was fully reported. That letter one of the ladies promised to place in the post-office of Metz, a promise she punctually performed. In a short time the Minister of War wrote for the depositions of the prisoners who were near when the act was perpetrated. The apparent surprise of the general and commandant on receiving these instructions, led to the belief that the memorial drawn out in the first instance had not been transmitted. Ten of the prisoners were now called upon to state all they had seen connected with the death of Thompson. What will be said of the justice of the French government, when it is stated, that the witnesses were conducted handcuffed to the city of Metz, where the trial was to take place, and

the accused not only without them, but even repaired there unattended by an escort. The result of the trial was the acquittal of the murderer, on the ground that our unfortunate friend had committed an act of rebellion in striking the veteran, and that the spot where he fell was within the *rayon* of the sentry's round. How far the verdict was just, it is but necessary to observe that the place where the bayonet was so cowardly and cruelly used, was within the barricade of the court yard, and that the sentry's walk was on the outside of it.

The confinement deemed necessary to expiate the offence of desertion was presumed to be about six months; there were, however, some Englishmen who had been here since the period of 1806. For them there was no hope of liberty till the termination of the war, yet these persons were seen to bear captivity with a fortitude and resignation almost inconceivable; neither the tyranny of general Maisonneuve or those serving under him, could cause their repining. It was not actually necessary to make an attempt to escape to become an inmate of Bitche; mere suspicion of

harbouring such intention was sufficient to induce the government to place the unfortunate prisoner in a confinement as intolerable to bear, as it was disgraceful to the authorities. If confirmation be necessary of the correctness of my assertion, it will be found in the case of general Murry. Though far advanced in years, he had been sent here on suspicion of intending to escape from the depôt at Verdun.* He, and likewise all other detenues, had come to France upon the faith of a passport delivered by Napoleon's ambassador, Count Otto, residing during the short peace of Amiens, in London. The cruelty of making prisoners, men who had a right to consider themselves thus protected, was a violation of the laws of civilized nations, and warranted their escaping in any manner whatever: nor was this unjust detention alone to be complained of, there was

* The ground for suspecting that general Murry intended to escape was, that he had recently purchased a fine horse. This officer had a daughter then at school in Verdun. Was it to be supposed (and as he used to inquire when giving the only apparent motive for the exercise of such barbarity towards him,) that he could leave his child in a country where profligacy and vice were seen to predominate.

scarce an act of the government exercised towards them, or those who had been captured during the war, but was intended to efface all recollection of liberty from the mind of the captive.

The Baron de Rogert commanding the division at Metz, when making a tour of inspection, visited Bitche. On that occasion we were drawn up in the court yard. Accompanied by the general and the commandant, he passed down the ranks, inquiring from each the offence which had brought him here, and the period of his confinement. On putting these inquiries to general Murry, the answer was, "I am here sir through the perfidy of your government." A reply which it is presumed was not agreeable to the Baron, as he passed on without making an observation upon it.

Soon after this inspection an aid-de-camp of the Minister of War, the Baron Schneider, whose parents resided in the town, came with authority to inspect the depôt, and report our situation. The inspection was minute; passing through the rooms as well as the *souterrains*, he inquired

into the grievance of each individual, and in most cases promised to represent to the minister the complaints made to him, particularly as regarded long confinement Petitions were prepared by several, praying for a removal on the ground of ill health, brought on by the humidity of the *souterrains*. Notwithstanding these assurances, not one of these applications were successful; it was fair therefore to presume the real object of the Baron's visit, was to afford him an opportunity of seeing his friends, and that the inspection of the depôt was a pretext for his absence from the capital.

Soon after the first detachment of prisoners arrived here, a few were permitted to visit the town during the day by ticket, and consequently without escort. Three of those persons took advantage of this liberty, and effected their escape. The wife of one of the party and her two daughters were residing at that time in the town. On the escape coming to light, they were instantly removed to the fort, and placed in apartments in the house of the gaoler, situated on the Grosse Tête, where immediately afterwards another daughter

was born. This family were but allowed the walk of the court yard, and suffered by a long confinement, for the act of the person to whom they were closely connected. It was a new feature in war, and a disgrace to the government, to see a lady and her children thus treated. The hatred of Napoleon to all that was English could not be more powerfully exemplified than in their case. It was an act exhibiting a want of humanity, incredible, were it not corroborated by gentlemen now living, who were at the same time confined with them.

The result as to whether the decree of the 13th December, 1811, would be acted upon, was now about to be ascertained. Many trials had taken place in the depôts, in all of which condemnation followed. The particulars of them (and as they were termed "judgments") were printed at the expense of the accused, and posted on the walls in the interior of the fort. The first condemned were two midshipmen, who had been retaken in attempting to escape from Verdun. The court was composed of military officers.

The accused being well acquainted with the French language, and aided by counsel, a defence was made, any thing but satisfactory to the court. Instances being cited where the lenity of the British government was shown towards French officers, then in England, who had actually broke their parole four and five times, and to which they were again restored. The case of General Simon, as well as that of General Le Fevre Desnouettes, commanding the chasseurs of the Imperial Guard, who finally succeeded in reaching France, *and was at that time employed by the government*, were particularly cited. These representations, however, had not the intended effect. The president told the jury that whatever might be the law of England, they could only act upon the decree before them. A verdict of guilty was then recorded: afterwards they were removed to the town prison. One of those gentlemen being under age, the minister of war decided that the decree was not applicable to him, he was notwithstanding ordered to Bitche. His companion, more fortunate, contrived to

escape from the gaol of Verdun, and arrived safely in England.*

On the 1st of May, it was usual to collect the convicts destined for the public works, at Bistre, in the vicinity of Paris, from thence they were drafted to Toulon, Brest, Rochforth, Cherbourg, and the different ports where works were being carried on. At Bistre, they were habited in slaves' dress; their heads were shaved, and an iron ball attached to a chain, was fastened by a clasp round the leg. Was it possible, was now the general inquiry, that our countrymen were to be thus cruelly dealt with? Many had been five months in the different gaols, after their condemnation, when the middle of April arrived. A decree then appeared, annulling the barbarous one under which the trials had taken

* This gentleman was connected with one of the first titled families in England, and had procured the return of two French officers, prisoners of war, under the assurance from the minister of marine, that on the arrival of the first in France, he should be allowed to return to his own country, a promise which, even after the second was sent over, was not performed.

place. Whether it was owing to a remonstrance on the part of the British government, we had no means of ascertaining. It was rumoured that on the arrival of the gentleman who had escaped from Verdun, and making known to Lord Castlereagh, then minister of foreign affairs, the situation in which so many of his countrymen were placed, that it was notified to Napoleon that if one English prisoner of war was sent to the public works, every French officer then confined in prison ships, for a breach of parole, should be immediately sent to a distant colony.

Whether true or otherwise, the report, it was evident that keeping parties, as these persons were, till the moment when the convicts were to be drafted from Bistre, that a threat of retaliation alone, caused Napoleon to recede. In the ordinance doing away with those condemnations, the mode by which the prisoner was to be conducted from the coast to the depôt, was particularly specified. If an officer, his parole was to be exacted at the port of landing, and then he was to proceed without escort to his destination. The soldiers and sailors were to be conducted

as heretofore, though the disgraceful use of the handcuffs was to be dispensed with. The parties, whether officers or sailors, &c. when deserting on the road, if retaken were to be confined in a fort or citadel for the remainder of the war. Such as had been condemned were now ordered to Bitche.

The apparent apathy of our government at the situation of those people so long kept in a state of uncertainty as to their fate, caused, nor was it astonishing, great dissatisfaction among them. Allowances should be made for the murmurs of persons in their situation, and not less so those contending with a rigorous confinement at Bitche. With a barrack yard, the extent of which we ascertained by paces, the only measure that could be adopted, did not exceed 175 by 55 paces. The greater part shut up in the *souterrains* where, during the winter months, the cold was excessive, and in addition to this punishment, we were locked up one hour in the middle of the day. It was not surprising if the prisoner was heard to complain of the hardship of his position, and exclaim against the government at home having lost the opportunity

of effecting his liberation when Mr. Mackenzie was at Morlaix, however presumptive Napoleon's demands might then have been.

For a long period there had been a brigade in the French service denominated the "Irish Brigade," and which was occasionally recruited from the depôts. It was composed of persons of all countries who had been captured in the British service, and who took this opportunity of getting out of a close confinement. When at Cambrai I witnessed two attempts to induce the prisoners to join that force; they were very unsuccessful. The command of this brigade was entrusted to Arthur O'Conner, who, on his expulsion from Ireland, coming to France, had been created a count of the empire. By such of the prisoners who fancied their position disregarded, the existence of this brigade was alledged as entirely owing to the prisoner being left without hope of exchange, that this apparent neglect forced men to become traitors, rather than remain for ever in captivity. These logicians forgot, however, than an Irish brigade had been formed so long back as the reign of Louis 16th, if

not before, and consequently that it had not its origin with Napoleon. There were even at this time English and Irish officers at Verdun who had served at an early period in that brigade.*

In the Moniteur of the 31st December, 1812, was published a list containing the names of 355 English prisoners who were represented to have broken their parole, in which mine, as well as my friends, were included; at the head were Sir James Crawford and Mr. Thomas Brooke, M. P. whom the Moniteur was kind enough to say had set the example to the rest. These gentlemen had been detained travelling in France, and as in the case of all the detenues; ought not to have been made prisoners. There were in that list one colonel, two lieutenant-colonels, one major, nine captains, (one only of the navy,) ten lieutenants of the

* On the occasion of the attempt to recruit the Irish Brigade from the prisoners at Cambrai, it was painful to witness the reception which two officers who came there for that purpose met with. They were not only hissed and hooted, but had to bear with observations which, traitors as they were, they must have felt severely. To obviate their recurrence, the commandant directed a brigadier to attend during these visits to the citadel. The few men obtained were Germans, or other foreigners who had been taken in Spain.

army, navy, and marines, amounting in all to twenty-three commissioned officers, with these were fifty-three midshipmen. The rest were composed of Captains and mates of merchantmen, merchant passengers, doctors, and detenues; a number of names were inserted without any designation at all. On looking over that list, it was easily seen that the minister of marine, under whose authority it was published, had been at considerable trouble in its composition; the fact of so many being inserted without professions, was a pretty clear proof that the object was to swell the number as much as possible. Why men should enjoy the privilege of parole, without rank or even designation, as those at the conclusion of these names, Monsieur Dacres might as well have informed us. The truth was, that there were really no such persons on parole; with respect to those who had quitted Auxonne, Baron De Vaux would not assert that that depôt was so considered.

On the arrival of the parties condemned in the different depôts, the number of prisoners at Bitche was necessarily augmented. The sailors

were now ordered to the town of Sarrelouis, at the distance of three days march: twenty-five were retained as servants, to perform the work of drawing water, cleaning the rooms and the *souterrains*, for which they were paid by a fund provided from the months' pay of those who had to remain.

Six additional rooms were opened soon after the departure of the sailors, and contrary to expectation, with an extention of liberty, as we were allowed access to each other, until ten at night: the fires and lights were likewise permitted till that hour. This change, which was hailed as the forerunner of others, was very agreeable. The comfort these new residences afforded was not of long duration. Two of the party placed here (an officer of the army and one of the navy) found means to escape from the fort, in disguise. The general and the commandant were not long in considering what should be done with those who remained. On the transaction coming to light, we were immediately placed in the large *souterrain*. The change from dry rooms to so cold a place, was

not only very annoying, but likewise a great hardship. There can be no doubt, the officers in question were fully justified in what they did; every man has a right to escape from an unjust and rigorous confinement. The general and the commandant, had they been certain we were implicated, showed a want of justice in making the change so great. There were other disposable rooms in the fort in which we might have been placed in perfect security. It was not however in accordance with the system of general Maisonneuve to let occurrences pass without severely punishing those who were in no way implicated in them.

Now a resident of more than two years in the fort, my companion and myself drew out a memorial to the minister of war, setting forth the severity of the confinement we had had to endure, praying a removal to a depôt on parole, or if otherwise, to some place where further extent of walk was allowed.

This document was accompanied by a certificate from the commandant as to the quiet conduct we had shown while under his authority.

The answer of the minister was, "I see no reason why I should order the petitioners' removal." Three months afterwards, a similar attempt to excite the clemency of the government was resorted to; separate memorials with certificates to the same effect as the preceding one, were transmitted. My companion's application received for answer that he was to be transferred to the depôt of Longwy, mine that I must remain under particular *surveillance*.

Of the motive to which the difference of these replies was attributable, it was impossible to form an opinion, in committing what our guardians were pleased to term an offence, we were alike culpable. The thought afterwards occurred that it was owing to unfounded representations made by the officer at Antwerp, or by Monsieur Bertrand at Auxonne, that I was to consider myself selected for an extension of punishment. Thus separated from a friend with whom I had for nearly three years passed through hardships and privations, only to be conceived by those who have been similarly situated, confinement to me became doubly severe. The dampness of the

place in which I had to rest brought on that very general complaint here, ague, and a great many of my companions were, at this period, suffering severely from it. The medical attendant of the fort deemed a removal to the hospital of the town necessary; I repaired there without regret, for it was a change, though not accompanied with more liberty than the court-yard offered.

The English were here placed in a long room, in the lower floor of the hospital, to the number of about sixty: in one of a similar description on the other side of the yard, there were several Spanish officers like ourselves, prisoners of war, who had been removed from a fortress near the Rhine. With them we were allowed no communication. Several deaths occurred in their room, and two in our ward during my stay. The latter were sailors who had been a long time in confinement; one of them occupying a bed next to mine, was in the last stage of consumption, brought on by excessive use of spirits, and dampness of the *souterrain*. When awaking in the morning I invariably inquired how he

had passed the night, and on my doing so that morning, his head being turned from me, and receiving no answer, on taking a more careful look I perceived he was dead. His death occurred unknown to the attendants of the ward, during the night. I perfectly remember, on the sailors coming to look at the corpse of their shipmate, one said, "Poor Bill, he don't need mind gens d'armes now."

Two windows looked from this apartment into the street, between them was a large fire place covered by a fire board. I had been but a few days in the hospital when a plan was formed to escape. It was by working a hole in the lower part of the chimney, of circular form. The work was carried on by means of a chisel and a knife. The stone and morter were separated in small pieces: while the party (one only being admitted at a time) was employed in excavating, the board was replaced. Each person, in turn, had to work two hours, day and night, till its completion. A sentry was placed at this end of the room: to attract his attention, and draw him to the lower part of

the ward, the inmates were to be seen playing at cards, and a variety of games, on which our guardians looked with apparently great interest. The soldier would occasionally put down a few sous on the chances of the game, if unfortunate the loss was sure to be made up in the following one by the person he had bet with purposely loosing. This was, doubtless, to them, a very pleasant and easy method of making a little money while on guard. This experiment to obviate suspicion, while the work was going on, could not have been more successful.

In the course of a week such a quantity of stone and plaister was removed, that the masonry was considered to be of no greater thickness than two to three inches, this was judged by measuring the thickness of the wall at the windows. Every preparation was made for the attempt at midnight. To our utmost astonishment, at ten o'clock in the morning, previous to the night we were to depart, the commandant appeared, accompanied by a body of gens d'armes. The chief medical officer was called in, and desired to point out those who were sufficiently well to leave the hospital.

Twenty five (myself of the number) were then re-conducted to the fort. So unexpected was this visit, that we naturally conceived information had been given by some one placed among us; however erroneous this opinion, it was the number of prisoners placed here, exceeding those of former occasions, that suspicious were excited; great was the disappointment, as may be conceived, of those who had anxiously and laboriously worked at the excavation.

At ten o'clock that night, long previous to which those in the fort had retired to rest, the alarm gun was fired from the grosse tête, to announce to the peasantry that a desertion had taken place.* Immediately on the information being sent to the general and the commandant, the latter repaired to the hospital to ascertain how many had actually

* It was a joyous sound to the boors inhabiting this rude and inhospitable district, as money was to be made by the re-capture of our unfortunate countryman. On one occasion, when two sailors had contrived to get out of the fort, they were instantly pursued by these people. Implements from the sythe to the pitchfork were employed to effect the object of their capture, and these unfortunate sailors were beaten and otherwise ill used, in a manner which natives of the most uncivilized countries might well have been ashamed of.

left. Nineteen were missing, the very few remaining were too unwell to risk the attempt; there was one individual left, who, to his great disappointment, being too corpulent, could not pass through the aperture. The sailors in the fort, on hearing this, said, that he ought to have been previously kept on short allowance for six weeks. Of the nineteen who took their departure, but one finally effected his escape, the others in the course of two days were brought back, having been taken but a very short distance from the town. There had been at different times attempts to escape from this fortress; a stranger viewing the walls from the glacis, and observing the numerous sentries by whom we were surrounded, would naturally suppose that success in such an undertaking was impossible. A long time before my arrival, a lamentable accident occurred on one of those occasions, when Lieutenant Hassel, Messrs. Worth, Mason, and Melville, midshipmen, found means to cut two iron bars at the end window of the small *souterrain*, but three yards from the rampart wall, and scarcely four from the sentry's box. The night was excessively dark, a rope was

attached to one of the remaining bars of the window, and thrown over the embrasure of the rampart. They succeeded in getting through, and when in the act of descending, either the officer of the guard, or a gen d'arme, unfortunately for them, passed at the moment; not seeing the rope, his cocked hat came in contact with it, and incensed at the obstruction, he drew his sword, and cut the rope. Those gentlemen at the moment descending by it, were precipitated a considerable height, falling directly under the bastion, at the foot of the draw bridge. The result was lamentable, Lieutenant Hassel was killed, Mason had both ancles dislocated, Melville had an arm fractured, and was otherwise severely injured, Worth, though bruised, got clear of the works. He was, however, compelled the following day to surrender to the inmates of a farm house, at a short distance, and was reconducted to the fort. No information as to the cutting of the rope, was given to the commandant or the general. On the gates being opened on the following morning, the body of Lieutenant Hassel, and the two gentlemen disabled, were seen lying close under the wall.

During my entire residence here, three desertions only took place, and they were successful, viz. that of the two officers confined in the same barrack with me, and a mate of a merchantman; how the latter got out was never known. It is extraordinary to relate that the Lieutenant commanding the gun brig the Linnet, on board of which the naval officer referred to was received became in the short space of six weeks a prisoner with us. His vessel had been taken by a French frigate on the following cruize, an ineffectual attempt to escape when on the road from the coast to the depôt at Verdun had consigned him to this confinement.

There was likewise an officer at this time here, who had some years preceding, contrived to reach England from the citadel at Valenciennes. This was not the only instance in which Englishmen who had been successful in getting out of France were again taken. Such is the uncertainty of war, that individuals of the same family met in this captivity who had been taken in different ships. In one of the depôts there was a captain of a merchantman and his four sons, the former

was at an advanced period of life, and though repeated applications were made to the government for his exchange they were ineffectual. The old man as likewise one of his sons died in prison. What! it may be inquired could be the inducement to keep a whole family from their homes and their affairs? the answer presents itself, they were the subjects of the only power capable of opposing the ambitious ruler of France.

It was not the severity of the confinement alone of which the inmates here had to complain, there were continued petty annoyances practised which it was a degradation to bear; all letters received or sent from the Fort were subjected to the commandant's perusal, an interpreter was employed for that purpose, and consequently the private affairs of the prisoner and of his friends were necessarily known; if mention was made in letters addressed to England as to the hardship of our confinement they were invariably stopped. All money coming thence was placed in the hands of an individual in the town' the parties for whom sums were remitted, had to apply to the commandant to receive even a very small part of this amount. Thus we were kept,

not only excluded from the world, but even the means intended to supply those necessaries which our unfortunate situation more particularly called for, were, if not withheld, doled out in a manner the most humiliating, as if the applicant was asking for money not his own. This system was more particularly acted upon in the latter part of the year 1813, under the pretext to prevent attempts at desertion, as it was presumed no one would incur the risk unprovided with money. It was frequently seen, when a written order on the agent in town was submitted for the signature of the commandant, (no payment would be made without it) to obtain, even 80 or 100 francs, that functionary would write thereon, good for 50, and sometimes less. His consideration for those who had money thus placed, was particularly shewn in favour of certain shops of the town, where, according to representation, the prisoner could be the best and cheapest served. When purchases were made in consequence of these introductions, he was not scrupulous in signing the order for their payment, whatever the amount might be. Money might find direction any where

but into the pockets of those to whom it belonged.*

Whether there was any *particular* consideration for this introduction of customers, it is not worth while to inquire. The bread consumed by the sailors, was of a very inferior kind, and made in the bakery of the fort; those who had the means to procure a better description, were supplied from the town; a loaf was not permitted to pass into the fort, without the previous cut of a knife, or the probe of a bayonet; precautions taken to prevent the introduction of small saws, by which the bars of the *souterrain* windows might be cut. When the town had to be visited for the purpose of making purchases, a gen d'arme

* At this period the exchange on England varied from 17 to 18 francs per £; when Napoleon put a stop to all communication between the two countries, even as regarded letters or bills of exchange, and this occurred to the best of my recollection, in the early part of 1812, when a Decree appeared ordering all letters from England, whatever their contents might be, to be burned, the exchange came down to 16 francs, with some few centiemes. Thus the reader will perceive how great the sacrifice was to those drawing on England at that time, when 25 francs, and sometimes 75 and 80 centiemes are now to be obtained. This sacrifice was not counterbalanced by cheapness of living, as many of the necessaries of life were then at a much higher rate than at the present day.

was ordered to conduct each applicant, the period of absence was not to exceed two hours; during these visits the gen d'arme never lost sight of his charge, a written application to obtain this permission was necessary, and it entirely depended on the humour in which the commandant might be, whether it was granted or refused.

The town was anything but an agreeable place to resort to, but more particularly when under such authority; visits were consequently not frequent, during my entire residence here I but requested them on six occasions, four of which only were granted. The shopkeepers, as is proverbial in France, were most extortionate in their demands. Towards the close of my stay here, a plan was formed to escape from the small *souterrain*, where a number of us had been removed from the larger one. At considerable labour and expense, a rope was constructed to scale the main wall of the rampart, made entirely of linen, which had been brought from the town under pretext for making shirting; several persons were employed in the operation, (at the same time taking care to carry on the work unperceived by

the gens d'armes) it was twisted and firmly sewed. To prevent a catastrophe such as had occurred to Lieutenant Hassel and his companions, about twenty feet of small chain, such as is generally used to attach portmanteaus, was collected from several in the fort, which was sewed inside at the end of the rope which would have to rest, attached to a poker on the rampart wall; a cut from the sword of the sentry would be necessarily unavailing. This completed, the bars within one of the windows of the souterrain were to be cut, which was effected by means of small saws, (similar to those used by watch makers) several of which had been sent from Verdun: how brought into the fort, but few of the party knew.

When the night arrived on which the first bar had to be separated, the weather was extremely favourable for the operation; it was so dark that the sentries placed at ten yards to the right and left of the window, could not discover an object beyond a few feet from them. A dance was purposely got up by those not immediately employed in the cutting, to the sound of a fiddle; and a variety of lights were kept, their

glare and the noise going on lulled suspicion. A silk handkerchief steeped in vinegar was tied round the centre of the bar, above where it had to be cut. After several fruitless attempts (the outer part of the iron, probably owing to long exposure to the air, having become exceedingly hard) a lodgment was made in the lower part, a few inches from the stone in which it was imbedded. The cut was in a slanting direction, the vinegar dripping from the handkerchief down the bar. The iron softened as the saw proceeded, and it was severed in the space of about half an hour, not however before two were broken. The following night a second bar was separated by the same means, there remained but another to remove. Although parted, to avoid suspicion, they were left in their original position. On the third night, while the work was going forward, persons were heard approaching the *souterrain* door; one of our companions had been fortunately placed there, a whistle (the signal agreed upon) being heard, the work was instantly discontinued, and parties were now to be seen sitting before the fire in casual conversation, while others kept up the dance.

On the gens d'armes descending, we were strictly searched, as was likewise the bedding and effects; these examinations continued for a considerable time, the rope, as soon as the signal was heard at the door, was hastily coiled up, and placed in a large iron kettle standing near the fire place; during the examination, each person was ordered to his bed, and strange to relate, the kettle was one of the very few articles which escaped observation. The rope, though not found, was known to have been constructed, and extra guards were placed over us during that night. On the following morning we were once more removed to the large *souterrain;* it was surprising, that during this visit of the gens d'armes, and the particular search which attended it, that the bars of the windows were not tried. For several evenings after our removal, domiciliary visits were paid for the purpose of finding the rope, which appeared to disturb greatly the tranquillity of the general and the commandant. It was now separated and concealed, wrapped next to the persons of several by whom it had been constructed, to be put together at a future period, when egress from

this abominable place appeared attainable. During the remainder of my stay, all attempts on the part of the commandant, as well as those under him, to obtain possession of the rope, so often alluded to, were ineffectual.*

It will naturally be inquired how the time was passed in this confinement; the amusements, as those at Cambrai, were of great variety. In the latter part of 1813, a billiard table was fitted out for our amusement, in one of the lower rooms of the principal barrack. This indulgence was owing to a similar one, it was reported, having been granted to the French officers confined in the prison ships in England. Cards, dice, draughts, chess, and a game termed Loto, on cards with numbers, served to pass many an hour agreeably. These, with inspection of French newspapers and music, formed the principal occupations in the rooms and souterrains. The latter however could scarcely bear the ap-

*After my departure from Bitche, the rope was found covered with a quantity of potatoes under one of the guard beds; the joy of the old general was reported as excessive, when getting into his possession the long searched for cord.

pellation, as all the performers appeared to be learning. The discordant sounds of so many instruments, (in the *souterrains* particularly) added to the crowing of cocks fed in cages, preparing for the mains in which they were to combat, made rest frequently difficult of attainment. In the court-yard, the amusements were different: here were to be seen parties playing at marbles, neither age or rank operated as preventives to the allurement which a game of "ring-taw" offered; pitching with copper at a mark, was not less a favourite amusement, as likewise "leap-frog," and "walking the line:" of the latter, the sailors were extremely fond, when any of their messmates had taken too strong potations of brandy or anique, to make the accomplishment an easy task; these, with cock fighting, constituted the occupations in the court-yard, which place was generally termed "being on deck."

However ludicrous these amusements may appear, it is not surprising they were resorted to: any thing, to use a common expression amongst us, was better than being dull. They

took the place of the sadness and reflection which invariably result from a deprivation of liberty. When such of the prisoners who felt gratification in a frolic and a fight became tranquil, (but which never occurred till their sous were expended, and grog was consequently stopped) the nights succeeding the pay-days, and more particularly during the winter, had a dullness scarcely to be described. It was then that all seemed to feel acutely the dreariness of their confinement. It is no affectation, when I assert, that the roll of the evening drum beating the retreat, at the early hour of eight o'clock, to indicate that the lights should be extinguished, and we were to retire to rest, created in me sensations as difficult to pourtray as it is to efface the recollection of them. I thought of home and absent friends who, in all probability, were at that moment seated at the social board, while I and more than one hundred Englishmen, were doomed to pass the dreary nights in this cold and comfortless place, I could not but hope, amidst their enjoyments, there was some kind friend would remember me. To those who

have never been inmates of a fortified place, it is difficult to describe the stillness which prevails, and particularly after midnight. Our rest was only disturbed by the relief-guard passing the souterrain windows, or the "qui vive" of the sentry. In the fogs of November and December, which here exceeded any I had ever seen in England, the soldier on guard not being able to discern an object at even a yard's distance, was heard at short intervals to call, "Sentinelle prènez guarde à vous," a warning which, generally given in a sonorous voice, served to remind us that our safe-keeping was no mean object with them. Owing to the elevated situation of the fort, the heat and cold were probably felt more severely by those who occupied it, than by the residents in the town beneath. From the commencement of June till the latter part of August, such was the effect of the sun on the court-yard that, with the exception of the sentries, who took care to keep within their boxes, it was almost deserted the greater part of the day. The thunder storms occurring during these periods were not only very frequent, but of long

duration. During one of these, in August, 1811, the lightning struck a wing of the barrack under which we slept. So great was the shock that the entire of the fort seemed to tremble. Within five yards there was a powder magazine containing, if the report was correct, 1800 barrels. Two of the sentries were knocked down by the fluid, and a third severely hurt. Particular days were held in high veneration by the sailors and soldiers; these were St. Patrick's, St. Andrew's, St. David's, and St. George's days. On St. Patrick's, those who had a few sous to obtain spirits, were invariably Irishmen. They were afterwards seen similarly celebrating the other days. This change of country was but an excuse for intoxication. If the sailor who had been drunk on St. Patrick's day, and now paying equal reverence to St. Andrew's, was asked to account for the change, his answer was, "he was not an Irishman himself, but his father was." There were three black men in the fort, who having no tutelar saint to worship, paid due respect to the others, by getting as intoxicated as the rest.

It was the evenings of these, and the pay days

mentioned, that the noise, commotions and fighting, were carried on to great extent; although these festivities commenced in good humour, they always terminated in quarrelling; the lights which were ordered to be extinguished at eight o'clock, were kept in frequently during the whole of these nights. The guards often came down to extinguish them, but no sooner had they returned conceiving the object of their visit had been accomplished, than the lights re-appeared. The commandant finding it useless to reason with the sailors, hit upon the expedient of locking up the *souterrains* for two or three days together, likewise forbidding the introduction of spirits; by this mode of punishment, the sailors became less refractory.

The confinement following these foolish and mischievous tricks, fell heavily on those who took no part in them. In one instance, which I shall ever remember, we were locked up in the large *souterrain*, for five days and nights. There was a gentleman at this time in the fort, who had been sent from Valenciennes. Inquiring what had become of the individual I had met there in

1811, who had come over to France, as mentioned in a preceding part of my narrative; he stated, that immediately after my removal from the town prison of that place, the person in question had become a French citizen, and was then practising as a physician in Paris. The thought occurred, that through friends in the capital, having interest with the Minister of War, he might find means to present a petition for leave to quit the fort. Without loss of time, an application to that effect was made, his reply came in due course. Thanking me for the attention I had shewn him at Valenciennes, he informed me, that he had been called in to attend a great personage, who would undertake to present my petition to the minister; on its being sent to him, he had little doubt as to its success. Now for the third time a memorial was prepared, accompanied by the usual certificates, and likewise one from a medical officer connected with the hospital of the town, setting forth, that owing to long confinement, my health was impaired, and that a removal had become absolutely necessary. Twice disappointed, I was by no means sanguine that this

application would be successful. In ten days from its being forwarded, the answer arrived. On the evening of the first of October, soon after being locked up for the night, a brigadier of gens d'armes, came from the commandant to inform me that the Minister of War had ordered my removal on parole to Verdun. This intelligence, though joyous, was to separate me from friends whose society had served to beguile many a tedious hour, a matter not easily effected in such a situation as that in which I had so long been placed. Many were the occasions when it was my lot to witness the parting of friends whose regret was shewn beyond the simple shake of the hand; if the finer feelings of nature were seen to give way on these separations, it was not the more discreditable to them.

On the morning of the second, immediately after the door of the *souterrain* had been opened, the brigadier came to conduct me to the commandant; I found him pacing the bridge which connects the petite tête to the fort, and as usual, enjoying the fumes of a pipe, a custom very prevalent with the French military at the early part of the day.

During the entire of my confinement, I very seldom had occasion to speak to him, those instances were in asking for a certificate, or liberty to visit the town; with one exception, he was generally affable, that one was, when requesting he would sign an order for the payment of some money by the agent in town, being, as it may be presumed out of humour, he said, "I will not allow these sums to come into the fort;" this took place directly after the desertion of the two officers from the barrack where I had been recently placed. On coming to him, he said, and in a very friendly manner, "you are going sir, to leave us;" answering, that the brigadier had been to tell me so the previous night; I asked if the removal was to Verdun. To my no small astonishment, taking me by the arm, he replied, "we will go and see all about it;" thus conducted to his bureau, the letter of the minister which lay upon the desk, was put into my hand, he then said, "as you understand French, you can read this." Requesting he would allow my taking a copy, he replied, "certainly, why not?"

To shew the difference in that answer, as

compared with the preceding ones, annexed is the translation:

Paris, 26th September, 1813.

3rd Bureau of the Administration of War, 5th Division.

To the Baron de Roget, commanding the 3rd Military Division at Metz.

Baron,—I have received the petition of Mr. R. L. a native of England, detained two years and seven months in the fortress of Bitche, praying for his removal from it. From the favorable representations which have been made to me on the part of this young stranger, I order his removal to the depôt established for the prisoners of his nation at Verdun. I authorize you to announce to the commandant of that place his intended arrival, and to furnish him with the passport necessary for his journey.

Agree, Baron, the assurance of my distinguished consideration.

(Signed) DUC DE FELTRE.

Referred to the commandant of the depôt at Bitche. (Signed) BARON DE ROGET.

Metz, 29th September, 1813.

From the very polite way in which this document was worded, it was evident some particular interest had been used with the Minister of War to effect my liberation. The attention shown by the person whom it had been in my power to assist when at Valenciennes, proved he was grateful.* Having taken the copy herewith, the commandant said, "Now sir, I have a caution to give you; you must not be the bearer of letters from the fort without my seeing them, nor must you be the medium of communication between the prisoners here and those at Verdun, except as relate to their private affairs; if you do not act on my injunction, and I shall be certain to know it, and you will speedily return here. The assurance was given that his warning should be strictly attended to. He then inquired whether I was ready to proceed on the following day, and in what time I could reach Verdun; answering that I should prefer remaining a day or two in the fort, to prepare for the journey, and that I could wish

* I have since ascertained that it was owing to the kind intercession of the Comtesse de Chabot, that the minister was induced to order my removal.

to have six days allowed for the route; he replied, and in better humour than I had before seen him, "Ah! I see what you want, you can go to Verdun in four days, or even three if you like, but you wish to enjoy yourself at Metz, where there is plenty of amusement. Two years and seven months I know is a long time to be confined." Although I understood his observation, I gave it no reply; however, he added, "I will grant you five days, one of which you may rest at that place, but beware how you conduct yourself, or the Baron de Roget will send you here again." His secretary was now desired to make out the passport and form of my parole, which signed, I received a written authority to pass out of the fort.

There were also ordered away at this time three captains of merchantmen and a surgeon of the navy; one of the former had to proceed to the hospital, at Metz, to undergo a second operation of amputating his right leg, the other two were destined for Longwy, and the surgeon was to be my companion to Verdun.

Now at liberty to move without the nuisance

of a gen d'arme, I prepared to pay a visit to the town; in order that no interruption should occur on the part of the sentries, a brigadier of gens d'armes escorted me past them, to the entrance of the tunnel at the upper drawbridge, saying, "you can now proceed." The outer sentry stationed at the lower drawbridge refused to let me pass, although the written document of the commandant was produced; this he either could not, or would not, read, and in a rude way, bringing his musket across my breast, I was ordered to return. Stating the occurrence to the brigadier, he finally conducted me past all the sentries. On reaching the glacis, I stopped a few moments, and sitting down on the grass covering the outer wall, took a view of the exterior of the fort. It was during this day the sketches here introduced were made.

After perambulating the town, and strolling a short distance into the country, I returned to my old companions. This sudden restoration to liberty made me somewhat uncomfortable: I could scarcely fancy I was walking without a guard. It was still harder to bear, when I

reflected it would soon separate me from some of the worthiest men I ever associated with. On the 3rd October, previously hiring a fiacre, I bid farewell to the fort which had held me so long and closely.

CHAPTER VII.

REMOVAL TO VERDUN——VISIT TO SARRELOUIS AND METZ——ARRIVAL AT VERDUN; PARTICULARS OF THAT DEPÔT.

Accompanied by the parties already named, I reached a little after three o'clock in the afternoon, once more, the town of Sargumiennes; good lodgings were here procured, and we passed the night in great comfort. Our fellow traveller, ordered to the hospital at Metz, suffered exceedingly during the day, owing to the jolting of the vehicle and the badness of the roads. The next morning, a mattress placed in a cart, on a quantity of straw, enabled him to bear the journey with much less pain than the preceding day. Hence to Sarrebruck (a neat town on the banks of the Moselle) was but a short distance. The stage was performed on foot, keeping near the cart, to afford our unfortunate fellow traveller any assistance he might require.

He was greatly dejected, and seemed to fear that he would not be able to reach his destination. At Sarrebruck we engaged a boat for our conveyance to Sarrelouis, otherwise called Sarrelibre. This travelling once more by water was exceedingly agreeable; on different parts of the Moselle the view of the country was beautiful. I had the gratification, on arriving, to meet with a doctor of the navy, with whom I had been confined at Bitche in the same room, as likewise a lieutenant of the 15th Hussars, one of the gentlemen who had frequently visited myself and companion in the town prison of Valenciennes. I dined, and spent a most agreeable evening in the society of these friends, as likewise part of the following day. In this depôt there were, as reported to me, between 1200 and 1500 British prisoners, principally soldiers and sailors.* It is a strong fortified town, and noted as the birth place of the celebrated Marshal

* In a former part of my narrative mention is made, when alluding to the power held by the gens d'armes, that a blow on them was punishable with death. An occurrence had taken place, some time preceding my arrival here, which it may

Ney.* On the 4th, having procured a cart for the invalid, and a fiacre for ourselves, after a tedious ride, we arrived, long after nightfall, at the city of Metz. The following morning we conveyed our friend to the hospital, and were surprised at meeting with several English prisoners placed in the same ward, who had come from Verdun. The remainder of this and the next day was spent in viewing the arsenal,

not be unnecessary to record, as a proof of the correctness of my statement. A prisoner of the name of Morgan had, when intoxicated, disarmed one of that corps, and afterwards thrown his sword through the barrack window. As may be conceived, he was instantly placed in confinement. The commandant speedily assembled a court-martial, composed of officers belonging to a regiment quartered in the town. Morgan was found guilty, and removed again into confinement. The following morning, before those in the depôt were liberated from their rooms, the sentence was carried into execution. The unfortunate man was conducted by a party of gens d'armes, and shot, in the fossé between the ramparts. The inhumanity of the commandant, in this procceding, did not appear to meet favour with the Minister of War, who ordered his instant removal. Had the sentence been transmitted to Paris, probably its execution might, if not have been rescinded, at least delayed, till further inquiry was made.

* A monument has been erected by the inhabitants to the memory of Marshal Ney. Sarrelouis is now in the possession of the Prussians. Frederick William, however great his dislike to this celebrated man, nevertheless yielded to the solicitations of his townsmen, and permitted its erection.

(one of the largest in France) the churches, theatre, museum, and other objects worthy of observation.

Metz is a large, populous, and handsome city, situated in a country very superior to the one we had quitted. On the morning of the 7th, at an early hour, the surgeon and myself took leave of the two captains destined for Longwy. Hiring a voiture with two horses, after a long and uninteresting ride, we reached the gates of Verdun at eight o'clock. Friends I had met with in other depôts, aware of my arrival, soon came to congratulate me on this emancipation.

Verdun is situated in the department of the Meuse, through which that river traverses, the separate parts are known as the upper and lower towns, it is a place of considerable extent, and strongly fortified.* The citadel, on an eminence, a little beyond the upper town, commands the whole; near it, there is a fine esplanade, or public walk, planted with trees; this formed a pleasant lounge to the English occupants, and is termed the roche; the houses here being generally larger,

*That celebrated engineer, Vauban, was a native of this place.

and better constructed than those in the lower town, became the residences of the greater part of our countrymen. The morning after my arrival, I received a summons to attend the commandant; on entering his apartment, there were two gentlemen, who I took to be English military officers, in conversation with him. The individual in command of the depôt, was Major Meulan, a member of the legion of honour, apparently from 30 to 35 years of age. On being desired to be seated, I informed him of my arrival the previous evening, "I am aware of it," he said, the place you come from is any thing but a recommendation, a remark which hurt me exceedingly. He then asked how long I had been at Bitche, and why I had been sent there. Naming the exact time, and that I had attempted to escape, he inquired, "what was the reason of your being confined so long, was it not much beyond the usual time?" Answering, in the affirmative, I told him the practise had been, when the number amounted to 300 in the depôt, draughts from 10 to 20 were made to others, but owing to a removal of the sailors, the number was

greatly lessened, and to which circumstance I attributed the long confinement I had undergone. "I hope," he said, "you will deserve the indulgence which all here enjoy, you must now go to the bureau, sign your parole, and receive a ticket, which will admit of your going beyond the gates." When about to depart, one of the gentlemen who had listened attentively, inquired, in English, how long I had been in France, if I had been taken in the service, and what part of England I came from. These questions, though not compulsory, I replied to. "I advise you," he said, "to be very cautious, and attend to what the commandant has told you." The admonition I considered ill-timed, when coming from an entire stranger, though a countryman, and I could not refrain from saying, that I was aware of the manner in which I should act, without his advice.* I was quite unprepared for the lectures

* The officers referred to, were Major General Lord Blaney, and Lieutenant Colonel Guard. I have frequently had the pleasure of meeting his lordship since that period, and on one occasion, when the occurrence became the subject of conversation, he good humouredly told me, I was quite right to give the reply I did, as it was quite enough to bear with the dictation of the then commandant.

of the commandant, and still more for that of the gentleman at the time with him. It appeared as if there was a stigma attached to having attempted to regain my liberty, though dearly I had atoned for it.

I then signed the required parole, and received a ticket, bearing my description, on which the figures 1307, I took to indicate the precise number of prisoners then in the depôt; these were composed of officers, naval and military, detenues, passengers, and a few old and infirm captains of merchantmen, who had been allowed to remain when those of a similar class were removed to Auxonne. Verdun was considered the head depôt in France, though not, however, to be preferred on that account, unless by those who had means to live comfortably and enjoy the liberty of the country. Owing to the great number of English here, of whom several were of nobility, and officers of high rank attached to each service, as well as persons possessed of considerable property, living was dear, and the rate of lodging was consequently enhanced. As regarded cheapness, as well as being situated in a

fine country, Auxonne was decidedly to be preferred.

To a stranger the Grande Rue, of Verdun, at the hour of three o'clock in the afternoon, presented a curious scene. Here were carriages of various descriptions belonging to Englishmen, others on horseback attended by their grooms; it did not seem as if we were in captivity. There were shops kept by the English, eating houses, club houses, livery stables, news rooms, and an English church; the sight of the congregation issuing thence was singular. Our countrywomen, (of whom there were many who had preferred remaining with their husbands and parents detained at the commencement of the war, as well as others coming to France, in some instances accompanied by the female branches of their families) when attending worship, almost inspired the English spectator with the idea that he was once more at home. The officiating clergyman, the Rev. Mr. Gordon, a gentleman deservedly esteemed, was paid by the British government. The sums collected in England for distribution among the prisoners in

the different places of confinement, were, in the first instance, transmitted here. An office was opened, and a committee formed to correspond with those of the different depôts where the distributions had to be made. This bureau had all the appearance of an English counting house.

I am not aware there was any specific distance marked out for our perambulations in the country. On passing the gates, and leaving the parole ticket at the guard house, it had but to be redeemed previous to the closing of the gates. A book, containing our respective names, &c. was kept in the bureau of the citadel; this was to be signed twice in the week. I was scarcely two months at Verdun when a desertion took place, of two military and one naval officer, success attended the undertaking. On a remonstrance being made to our government, those parties were ordered to return. Whenever desertions occurred, the number was sure to be augmented; instead of three, the absentees were represented as amounting to twelve: suspicion haunted the mind of some one, and who I could not trace, to include me in the list. Natu-

rally alarmed at the report, (Bitche being fresh in my memory,) I hastened to consult with friends, and acting on their advice, repaired the following morning to the commandant to show how unfounded the report was. The evening previous to that visit, and long after retiring to rest, two gens d'armes abruptly came to my room, ordering me to rise. I was told they had come by authority from the commandant, to ascertain if I had decamped; on being convinced to the contrary, they retired. This nocturnal visit was annoying beyond idea; bringing to my recollection what I had read of the worst times of the revolution, and it deprived me of sleep for the remainder of the night.

Major Meulan received me with affability, saying, "You have done right sir, to come as you have done." That officer had not been long appointed to the command at Verdun. From the effect of a severe wound received in Spain, at this time, he moved on crutches. The preceding commandant, who had died, replaced the notorious General Wirion, of whose conduct

towards the English prisoners, long and interesting statements have at various times appeared.

At the early part of the war, the funds of many, particularly the detenues, were not reduced to the low ebb they now were. Gaming was then carried on to an extent scarcely to be credited: houses were opened under the appellation of banks, similar to those of the Palais Royal, in which play had its various shades and gradations. General Wirion took the opportunity (nor was it badly selected, as gamblers have little right to complain) to tax, for his own benefit, these establishments. Probably owing to the success which attended this system of licensing, large sums poured into his coffers, exacted from persons in his custody, and under a variety of pretences. When the captains of merchantmen formed part of the depôt, the general conceived that as they were without rank, they ought not to enjoy the liberty which those differently situated claimed. To obtain permission to visit the country, sums varying in amount were paid by this class to subordinate officers,

acting under the general's authority. Some of the parties deserted: he instantly ordered the remainder into confinement, in an old building, formerly a convent, within the walls of the citadel.

There had been, for a long time, at the head of each service, of the army and navy, a superior officer selected, through whom all applications had to pass. The chief of the military service was Major-General Lord Blaney, Lieutenant-Colonel of the 89th regiment, and who had been taken on an expedition to Malaga. Sir Thomas Levie, wrecked in his majesty's ship Blanche, on the coast of France, was at the head of the naval class. These officers were in commission at the time of their capture, by which alone the French government recognized their rank, otherwise there were some of higher rank in the depôt, who, detained at the commencement of the war, were merely considered as detenues. Whenever a desertion occurred, or complaints had to be represented, General Wirion invariably sent for the officer at the head of the class to which the party belonged. Although

the captains of merchantmen had no one to represent them, they found in Sir Thomas Levie an able and willing advocate.

Those confined in the citadel drew up a memorial, setting forth the hardship of their situation, he undertook to plead their cause with the general. The latter became indignant at the interference, and refused to order their release. These intercessions became troublesome; in order to rid himself of them, Sir Thomas was accused of exciting those men to acts of insubordination. Representations to that effect were made to the government, and charges of the most unfounded nature were preferred, to repel which he was called upon to plead before a military court, assembled at Mont Medie, a fortress in the department of the Ardennes, to which he was conducted, under a military escort. The result of the trial was the honourable acquittal of that officer. Soon afterwards, obtaining an interview with the Minister of War, circumstances were brought to light, which the general had little anticipated: he, in turn, was

ordered to the capital, and warned of the serious charge of having extorted money from the English residents, at various times, and to great amount. It was reported that on the first interview between General Wirion and Napoleon, by whom he had always been highly considered, the decorations he wore were torn from his breast. If this be correct, it showed, that however severely Napoleon might treat the prisoners of war, he would not suffer any officer to practice extortion upon them.* Whether

* How far this supposition is correct, I shall leave the reader to decide, by giving the following list of officers who, at various times, and in different depôts, when placed over the English prisoners practiced extortion :—

Wirion—A general and inspector of Gendarmerie, officer of the Legion of Honour, intrusted with the command of the depôt at Verdun—Committed suicide.

Courçelles—Colonel and commandant of Verdun, and of the department of the Meuse, officer of the Legion of Honour —Dismissed the army.

Demarget—Lieutenant of Gendarmerie, member of the Legion of Honour—Dismissed the army.

Massin—Lieutenant of Gendarmerie, member of the Legion of Honour—Committed suicide.

Bouillé—Marechal de logis of Gendarmerie, pay-master, and member of the Legion of Honour—Reduced to the ranks.

————A lieutenant of Gendarmerie, (name forgotten) commanding the depôt at Sarrelouis—Committed suicide.

the General wanted courage to face this inquiry, or had not the means to prove his innocence, is not necessary to inquire. On ascertaining from his counsel that the proceedings were taking an unfavourable turn, he retired to the Bois de Boulogne, at the extremity of Paris, and put an end to his existence with a pistol. On the occurrence becoming known at Verdun, an officer on the staff followed the example.

These events excited the astonishment of the French inhabitants, the captains of the merchantmen were now restored to the liberty of the town and country. The conduct of General Wirion had been marked by an indifference to humanity on many occasions, scarcely to be believed. At one time he formed the prisoners into classes; if even one deserted, he instantly sent the rest to Bitche. If a party was seen to arrive from thence, and any of their number

Mandevellars—Captain in the army, aid-de-camp to General Wirion, a member of the Legion of Honour—Dismissed the army.

Besides these there was another aid-de-camp of General Wirion's, whose name has likewise escaped my recollection—Dismissed the service.

missing, however long the confinement had been, they were re-conducted in twenty-four hours afterwards, without investigation or pity, to their former abode. Of all classes in the depôt, there was none so obnoxious to him as the midshipmen. His attempts to subdue their spirit by confinement were ineffectual, and he was heard to declare, that they gave him more trouble than all the other prisoners under his command. He eagerly sought opportunities to confine them to the citadel, in which yard there is a round tower denominated the Tour D' Enghien, having been expressly built for the confinement of that unfortunate prince. It became the abode for a period of ten months of a number of the midshipmen; owing to the annoyance which the repeated solicitations of their friends who resided in the town caused general Wirion, he at length relented, and ordered their liberation. An order was created by them denominated "The Knights of the Round Tower." The members celebrated the anniversary of their liberation by a dinner. On which occasions, each appeared with the riband of the order.

A song, composed by one of the party, was sung at these festivities, of which the annexed is a copy.

Ye noble hearts devoid of fear,
Slaves to power, slaves to power;
Spite of fate we're happy here,
Bold Knights of the Round Tower.

We've many toils and dangers seen,
And drank the dregs of anguish keen;
Till now of late, confirmed we've been,
Bold Knights of the Round Tower.

Then why should we be ever sad,
Since sadness often drives us mad;
Through fortune's frowns we'll still be glad,
Bold Knights of the Round Tower.

In vain the gaoler's drunken face,
Would fain our happiness displace;
Still mirth and harmony shall grace,
The Knights of the Round Tower.

Then may we ever banish grief,
And never want for grog and beef,
Till peace shall grant us full relief,
From every Gallic Tower.

There was no lack of amusement at Verdun. The horse and boat races got up by the English residents, attracted many strangers as well as families from the towns in the vicinity. The

theatre (rather a neat building) afforded opportunities for English amateur performances, the receipts were for charitable purposes. The female characters were taken by the younger and more slender, having a taste for theatricals; they were attired, or as they termed it, "rigged out," by women. Had steps and gestures accorded with the correctness of the costumes, those performances would have gone off with more eclat, as it was, the change of the pantaloons for the petticoat, appeared excessively inconvenient. In the green room there was no want of restoratives, liquids from champagne to brandy were amply provided, owing to this, a little over acting was occasionally perceptible, putting aside all gravity when the part ought to have been tragic.

Verdun being situated on the direct road from Paris to the Rhine, had constantly something to attract attention. Napoleon invariably passed through here on his way to and from the armies, and this was likewise the route of the greater part of the Grande Armée and the Imperial Guard when on their way to Russia. Strange to relate, the French head quarters which the preceding twelve

months had been at Moscow, were now at Metz, but two stages from our residence. France invaded, was in her turn to experience miseries great as those she had unsparingly inflicted on other states. We were soon to witness the passage of the wounded in the recent actions, a sight novel to many here.

A few days after the battle of Leipsic, once more leaving his discomfitted troops, Napoleon arrived on his way to Paris, travelling incog, under the title of a count. He was attended by Caulincourt, minister for foreign affairs, two general officers, aides de camps, and the Mamaluke Austin. He alighted at his customary resort, the hotel, the three Moors.* There had been some time a table d'hôte established in that inn, at the hour of half-past five, and I happened

*The reader will be surprised when I state, that the carriage which brought Napoleon on this occasion to Verdun, I saw exhibited in Liverpool, some time after its capture by the Prussians. The coachman, (Jean Orn) on my telling him that I had seen it at the period alluded to, seemed to doubt my assertion, I however called to his recollection a few circumstances attending that arrival, which soon convinced him of the correctness of my statement.

for the first time, to dine there on that day, little anticipating I should behold the man who had so long separated me from my home. Unlike many, I had no desire whatever to see him. At the conclusion of the dinner, accompanied by a friend, I was in the act of leaving, and had scarcely entered the hall when Napoleon passed by us. Taking his station at the foot of the stair-case, he waited while Caulincourt (who, as reported, was suffering from the gout) descended. The Emperor of the French, as he was designated, was easily recognised; his appearance, uniform, &c. corresponded in every particular with the drawings, prints, &c. at this time exposed in the shops and stalls of the public thoroughfares, He had on a grey travelling coat, which was unbuttoned on reaching the stair-case, under it was one of green, with red trimmings and red collar. There were rows of small white buttons on each side of the breast. This was the uniform of the chasseurs of the Imperial Guard. He had three small decorations and a plain star. The small clothes and waistcoat appeared to be of white kerseymere, his boots

came fully to the knee, and under a small cocked hat he wore either a black silk cap or handkerchief.*

On his arrival, which had been some days anticipated, being known, the visiters in the hotel were speedily ejected, and a guard was immediately placed at the entrance. The Mamaluke, covered in a fur cloak, sat the whole of the time on the dickey of the carriage. Napoleon remained scarcely an hour: in the interval, the authorities, comprising the general commanding the town, the mayor, sub-prefect, and the commandant of the prisoners, were seen to attend. It was said that the general and commandant were alone admitted to an audience. Inquiring of Major Meulan, whether there were many English residing out of the town, and receiving an affirmative reply, he said, they must instantly come in. It surprised me to see so few Frenchmen assembled to witness their Emperor's departure. On his getting into the carriage,

* The French officers of the infantry were to be seen, when on march, wearing under their military caps one of black silk net. This, I was told, was to prevent drifting snow from penetrating their ears.

there was some faint cheering. Attempts were made at illumination in the streets through which he had to pass: in some windows two candles sufficed, while others exhibited but a single lamp. Six gens d'armes were the escort to the Paris gate. It was a matter of surprise, not less to the inhabitants than to ourselves, that after so much recent severe fighting, and the head quarters, as I have before observed, being very near, that the wounded, who, it might be presumed, were in great numbers, in rear of the armies, had not yet appeared at Verdun. According to report, orders were issued for their detention, till after Napoleon's passing. If this was correct, the object evidently was to prevent exciting the feelings of the French people at beholding so much human misery. In two days after, however, those unfortunate and neglected men began to arrive. The accounts published in the French papers relative to the advance of the invaders, garbled as they were, nevertheless inspired the hopes, in some, and almost the certainty in others, that our captivity would soon be brought to a happy

termination. France depopulated beyond conception,* and especially during the last year, did not seem in a condition to repel the immense forces now pressing forward to her invasion. About this period, a column of Austrian prisoners arrived, remaining but one night. They had been taken in the attack on Dresden. Their number which was originally announced to be 4,000, now appeared not to exceed 1,500. It is impossible to convey an idea of their pitiable condition, owing to fatiguing marches, want of food, and still more of proper covering, the greater part were as spectres. Their lodging for the night was in the open air between the ramparts of the citadel; and brown bread and water their only subsistance.

In 1809, during my residence at Cambrai, immediately after the French armies occupied Vienna, there were fêtes and rejoicings to commemorate that event. Military officers, and those in various situations under the government, did not scruple, when in the presence of the prisoners in the cafés

* My observation, the reader will conceive, applies only to the male population.

and hotels where they occasionally met, to use expressions as little agreeable to us, as creditable to them; although not directly addressed, they were nevertheless intended for our hearing. These boastings were to have their limit; little was it anticipated that the then subjugated powers of the north, would be seen to come forward as they now were to chastise their former oppressors. The drama had commenced at Moscow; the *denouement* was reserved for Paris. The Moniteur, and all other papers announced, day after day, the unextinguishable loyalty of the French people; their endeavours by means of subscriptions, gifts, &c. to re-place the losses which the army had sustained. Towns were represented as emulating each other, in showing an attachment to Napoleon, and a determination to support, as it was termed, "the national honour." Horses were provided to remount the cavalry; money, as well as offers to serve, on the part of those who had escaped the different conscriptions, were seen pouring in on the government. A new army, as if by magic, was collected, it was however, very far from equalling that which had entered Russia.

The fragments of regiments returning thence, were filled up with conscripts imperfectly drilled.

The campaign opened with success, though but for a short time, to the French arms. The battles of Lutzen and Boutzen seemed to wipe away, in part, the recollection of the misfortunes of the preceding year. The bold attack of the allies on Dresden, although unsuccessful, astonished the French people exceedingly, and probably Napoleon likewise, who was but a few hours within the walls of that place, when the attempt was made to storm it. The battle of Leipsic was reserved as a finish to his iron rule over the German people. After all the sacrifices, contributions, and exactions, to reinforce the army, an expedient was hit upon to augment the cavalry. It was by forming four regiments composed of the *elite* of the youth of France. This force was denominated the Guard of Honour; each individual had to provide his horse and equipments. These young men were to be constantly near the person of Napoleon, and at the expiration of twelve months each private was to become an officer, and attached to the different

regiments of the Grande Armée Owing to the continued conscriptions it was found impossible to procure substitutes. By drawing from classes which had been fortunate enough to escape the five years preceding, it was evident that if the war continued every individual capable of bearing arms would become a soldier. With such a prospect, and the allurement of an officer's commission, in the short period here named, it was not surprising how readily the scheme took. The regiments referred to were formed at Paris, Lyons, Bourdeaux and Amsterdam, the latter place being then part of the French Empire.

When witnessing the passing of one of those regiments through Verdun, to join the armies, it was observed as the handsomest corps of light cavalry that had been seen. The uniforms, horses and different appointments showed to what extent their credulity had been worked upon. They represented more a corps of officers than privates. How Napoleon performed his promise to these volunteers will hereafter appear.

On the arrival of the wounded, scenes occurred, of which, I have to regret my inability

to convey to the reader an adequate description. Officers took precedence, travelling in vehicles of almost every kind. Many were severely wounded, and several died immediately after being sent to the hospitals and to lodgings in the town: of the number were a general and seven colonels, their deaths occurred within a few days. Then came the subalterns and privates; these unfortunate beings were unprovided with medical attendants. The country at this time was covered with snow; convoys composed of twenty and thirty waggons arrived at intervals during each day. From the Metz gate to the bridge on the Meuse, (a distance, probably, of a quarter of a mile) they formed one line. The carts and waggons were of the rudest description, the bottoms and sides being constructed of wooden railings, to the latter were attached by cords, hoops of half circular form, to support the coverings which were of canvas, blankets, or sacking. Small quantities of straw were placed underneath. These vehicles generally contained fifteen to twenty of these miserable men; owing to the bad state of

the roads the convoys moved very slowly. It was distressing to witness the sufferings of so many wounded and abandoned soldiers; whenever a stoppage occurred to a waggon, those in the rear had necessarily to wait; then the moans and sufferings, as well as the execrations heard to issue from under the frail coverings was horrible. Many protruded their hands through the railings, soliciting relief; on arriving at the bridge, at which there is a small square, a partial examination took place of the inmates in each waggon, when many were found dead. In one which I saw, there were five who had died on the day's journey. Owing to not having proper bandages and dressings, blood marked powerfully on the snow the tract which they had passed. The inhabitants, on beholding the condition of these neglected men, seemed horror struck, and afforded all the assistance in their power, by supplying them with bread and nourishment of various descriptions.

These scenes forboded the miseries which it was anticipated would soon occur in their own neighbourhood, on the approach of the allies. Of the

number of the wounded passing through, as likewise those remaining at Verdun, no precise calculation could be made; by some it was computed, at not less, in the space of six weeks, than 10,000 men; the hospital, the citadel, and the stalls of the cavalry barrack were filled, there was not an adequate number of French surgeons to be found. The English professional men, attached to the army and the navy, (to their honour be it spoken) voluntarily lent their aid to their wounded enemies. Death, as may be supposed, was busy among them; the interments took place after midnight, the carts conveying the dead at such a lonely hour, (those coming from the citadel, passed under my window) had a hollow and melancholy sound. The spot selected for the burials, was a field a short distance beyond the ramparts of the town; large graves were made, and the bodies being placed in tiers, without coffins, had a covering of sand and quicklime. The one I saw, appeared capable of containing a great number; it was impossible to look on these pits without feelings of execration against the man through whose ambition they had perished.

In Egypt, at Moscow, and at Leipsic, the French army had been deserted by its chief; the wounded soldier incapable of further action was no longer an object of attention, else, why were they seen arriving here unattended by medical men. It was generally observed, that very few French soldiers were to be met with, who had undergone amputation. Owing to the long duration of the war, when we consider the immense armies which France kept, (even since the period of 1803) constantly engaged in active warfare, it might have been thought that a disabled soldier would be met at every step, this not being the case, how are we to account for the scarcity of such spectacles, otherwise, than supposing amputations were forbidden, in order that the pension list might be spared.* The inhabitants now began

* When the English doctors attended the French wounded, instances were frequent, as may be supposed, where amputation was necessary. On our countrymen reporting such cases to the French chief surgeon, the subject was invariably evaded, and he turned the conversation to some other topic; this I had from a friend who actually made several similar communications. I have no hesitation in asserting, that I have seen more men having lost a limb, during a visit to Greenwich hospital, than I saw throughout France, (not

to express anxiety that we should not be removed, as they could not believe the allies would fire upon the town while we remained. At the latter end of December, the prisoners of war of different nations, in depôts near the Rhine, were sent far into the interior. Although the enemy was advancing, we did not seem objects of much attention to the government. It was not, however, to be supposed, that we should be allowed quietly to remain here, till the Prussian army appeared. Applications were frequent to the commandant, to ascertain when our removal was likely to occur. The replies were, "I wait for orders," or, "I have written to the minister, but I have no answer." On the last of these occasions he expressed his hope, that whatever might occur, as we were all on parole, that our conduct would be marked by regularity. In this state of uncertainty, every one prepared for a long march, vehicles of various descriptions to convey those who had families, having the means to pay, were purchased. A body of engineers and artificers recenty arrived,

even excepting the inmates of the Hotel of the Invalides) during the entire of my captivity.

were immediately employed in putting the fortifications in repair. The arched passage of the Metz gate was filled up with earth, and a battery constructed before it, the citadel was provisioned and placed in a state of defence. Detachments of infantry, artillery, and cavalry continued to pass on their way to the Grande Armée. On occasions when the arrivals occurred during the night, the glare from the lamps, and torches carried at head of the respective regiments reflecting on the arms, accoutrements, &c. gave to the whole an appearance as if we were in a place about to be besieged.

At this period, the remains of the Polish division, which had been commanded by Prince Poniatowski, arrived on its way to Challons for the purpose, as reported, of being reformed. At the opening of the campaign, this corps was represented as 15,000 men, whether it had been separated, we knew not, they now, however, mustered, by casual observation, from 2000 to 2500. These troops, as stated in the bulletins, defended the village of Wackaw in the vicinity

of Leipsic, sustaining throughout the day, heavy and repeated attacks of the allies, they suffered severely; an officer of this corps, asserted their loss on that day alone, at half their original number, they were the finest troops we had yet seen. An interest was excited when looking on these brave but unfortune Poles; they still retained their national cockade, and though in Napoleon's service, formed a separate force, not even appearing to associate with the officers and soldiers of the French army. The carriage of their lamented commander came with them; one part of its top had been carried away by a cannon shot which had shattered the whole of the vehicle. On the pannels were inscribed in French "H.R.H. Prince Poniatowski, 7th Corps of the Grande Armée." The defection which had occurred in many of the German regiments at different periods since the campaign of Moscow, induced Napoleon to disarm the remainder. These brave Poles, we were afterwards told, met with similar treatment on arriving at Challons, and were marched further into the interior.

The regiment of the guard of honor which had been formed at Amsterdam, now disembodied, passed through Verdun; their indignation was excessive at the treatment they had met with. Their horses and accoutrements, provided at great expense, were turned over to the different cavalry regiments of the old and new guard. The formation of the four regiments alluded to, was viewed with no very pleasant feeling by the French army; the conquerors of so many fields felt disgust at seeing these young men placed near the person of their chief. Very soon after, one of the regiments joined the army, it had to sustain the attack of a considerable corps of Cossacks. For the first time in action, and but recently formed, it could not be a matter of surprise if they were speedily overthrown. Each of the regiments alluded to, had been attached on arriving at the army to those of the cavalry of the guard, in order, as the Moniteur stated, to their being instructed in military movements. The first action proved unfortunate, and Napoleon seized the opportunity to get rid of this volunteer force in the way described. They returned in a

pitiable condition.* It was impossible to be a resident here, so near the French head quarters without feeling an interest as to the movements of our enemies, as well as those of the allies who were

* Having in preceding parts of my narrative alluded to the depopulated state of France, resulting from the abominable law of the conscription, as well as the chicanery practised to procure substitutes to fill the vacancies which death occasioned in their armies, the result of so many battles, I may be permitted to quote from a very able work, (General Foy's History of the Peninsular War) by which the reader will perceive I have not over-drawn the picture:—"The abuse of the conscription began with the renewal of hostilities on the continent. The legislative enactment which fixed the duration of the regular service of conscripts at four years, was wholly disregarded; men entered the service not to leave it again for life. The reserves had but a momentary existence, and young men were sent to war as soon as they were drawn; nay, those to whom certain legal exemptions applied, remained debtors of their blood to their country, not only till the age of twenty-five years, but so long as they were not liberated by a formal act of the government. The vote of the annual levies was transferred from the legislative body to the senate. A councillor of state was appointed to the direction of the conscription, and the supply of the lion's den was not the least important of the ministerial departments. Moveable columns traversed the territory of France, and, sword in hand, forced her to become a conquering nation. It was found necessary to establish a legislation of exception for a multitude of offences, the offspring of a new tyranny. This tyranny, harsh against persons, was also fiscal, as well from the nature of the penalties as on account of the immense

coming forward not only to effect the conquest of France, but likewise the liberation of not less than 80,000 prisoners composed of various nations within her territory. Our information was necessarily through the bulletins, false as their statements invariably were there was sufficient to judge that the crisis was at hand, when it would be seen whether the French, arrogant in victory, were not equally servile in defeat.

The Austrians, under Swartzenbourg, were

sums which substitutes cost. The limit of twenty to twenty-five years, fixed by the fundamental law, was not long enough for the consumption of the species. Government fell back on the past and anticipated upon the future. Uniting the cunning which destroys respect, and the force which excites hatred, it devised unusual appellations to deceive the people. Sometimes legions, called legions of *reserve*, were created for a special destination, and were no sooner formed than they were transferred to another. Sometimes calls of volunteers were made, as if the word alone had not been a laughing stock. Citizens married and engaged in useful occupations, were put in requisition, and removed to a different part of the country, by the name of *National Guards in activity*. Young soldiers were allured into regiments nominally added to the Imperial Guard, but not allowed to share its prerogatives. The conscripts who escaped by the payment of money, were subsequently taken into the Guards of Honour, the *ban* and the *arrière ban*. Thenceforward the natural death of a Frenchman was that which he found in the field of honour."

advancing through Switzerland. The Russians, Prussians, and Saxons, by the more central parts of the Rhine; the Dutch and Westphalian troops through Holland; and the British army, the only one of the allies that had never stooped to the conquerer, was soon to view from the summit of the Pyrenees, the fertile valleys of the south. A considerable British force had likewise landed in Holland. France seemed to have an enemy at every point.

At the latter part of December the doctors of the navy received the unexpected permission to return to England, being exchanged. This unexpected liberation was considered as being entirely owing to the want of medical attendants in the French armies, many of whom were, at this period, prisoners in England. The doctors of the military service not being included in the exchange, caused general surprise.

The release of the officers alluded to, the twenty-one captains of merchantmen liberated from Auxonne, and an inconsiderable number of sailors who had been employed in constructing

a bridge over the Meuse at Givet,* to which depôt they belonged, as likewise a few officers and detenues from Verdun, comprised the exchanges occurring since the period of 1803. The total number did not even amount to 100. Of those allowed to return to England from the depôt on which I write, were Lord Yarmouth, who had been detained at the commencement of the war; Captains Woodriff, Gore, Brenton, and Fane, of the navy; Colonel L'Estrange, and a few surgeons of the army. To what motive their liberation was attributed, I had no means of ascertaining.

A regiment of infantry and one of light cavalry (the 11th chasseurs à cheval) had their

* It was said that Napoleon was much pleased on viewing the work. This, I believe, was the only instance in which English prisoners were employed during the war on any of the public improvements. Not so the Spaniards, who were to be met with in numbers repairing the old and constructing new roads. If I am correctly informed, the celebrated Napoleon canal was principally formed by Spanish prisoners. During this visit to Givet, the lady and her children, who had been confined in so disgraceful a way at Bitche, named in my observations on that place, received permission from Napoleon to return to their homes. This occurred a long time after their removal from the fort.

head quarters at Verdun. When a party of the latter were watering their horses in the Meuse, a private having penetrated beyond the proper depth, was carried away by the current. Notwithstanding his cries for assistance, there was none of his comrades daring enough to attempt extricating him from the perilous situation. There was, however, an individual at hand, willing to risk his life in saving the chasseur, and that person was a lieutenant of the British navy; seeing the man float past the windows of his apartment, which overlooked the river, he instantly sprung in and brought him safely to the shore. The horse was however, drowned. This act of intrepidity was performed not only in view of several of the soldiers of the regiment, but likewise of many of the inhabitants, and for some time it formed the topic of conversation. Our countryman received the thanks of the officers of the regiment; the gallant deed was likewise noticed by the authorities, and by them communicated to the Minister of War. The opinion prevailed that a passport, at least, would be sent to the lieutenant that he might be allowed to return to his own country.

The reader will naturally inquire was such a feat of intrepidity and humanity suffered to pass without notice! Certainly not. It was noticed, and in a way too which surprised all here, by an offer of conferring on the party the decoration of the legion of honour; one which Napoleon must have been aware His Royal Highness the Prince Regent would not permit any British officer to wear. It was moreover the same decoration that had adorned the breast of General Wirion and his worthy associates, at a time when they were pilfering the unfortunate British prisoners committed to their custody. The French army of St. Domingo had at an early period of the war capitulated to a British squadron on the condition of being regularly exchanged. Napoleon refused to ratify the convention, alleging it was only an act of humanity to rescue those 4000 men from the fury of the blacks. Our government finally yielded, aud sent over the whole without exchange. How great the difference. Here a prisoner who had nobly saved a French soldier from certain destruction, was not considered entitled to the humanity urged in the case of the

army alluded to. There were many wounded naval and military officers at Verdun; some so severely as to be incapable of further active service. Wounds found no sympathy with the despot at this crisis ruling France, else why not have permitted their exchange. Many of our countrymen had witnessed the passing of Russian, Prussian, and Austrian prisoners, on more than one occasion, when returning to their homes, while they were doomed to what appeared an everlasting captivity.

There were parties resident here detained contrary to conventions made at the time of their surrender; nor were flags of truce invariably respected. Two lieutenants and a midshipman, decoyed under the latter, were imprisoned in the fort of which so long an account appears in a preceding part of my narrative: so much for the faith and honour of the Imperial Government then seen to rule in Gaul. As if to convince us how greatly the male population had been lessened, detachments of boys (many not exceeding fourteen years of age) arrived at intervals, destined for the armies. They had been drawn from the

fleets in the Texel and the Scheldt: a number of seamen had some time preceded them. Of what use such a youthful force could be in defending their country, could not be conjectured. It was said they were but to do duty in the garrison towns, during the absence of the regular troops. These poor boys, as may be supposed, were greatly dejected; they had had a very long march, which was made the more fatiguing from the badness of the roads and severity of the weather. Each party was headed by a drum. What could it otherwise be termed than cruelty, thus marching ineffective beings to the seat of war.

If, in the number of English collected here, the whole being without occupation, quarrels frequently took place, it was not surprising. From the particular position of parties, even the slightest offence which, in any other situation, might, through interference of friends, have been amicably arranged, seldom passed over without a duel. Many, during this captivity, occurred, with fatal results: I believe, during the establishment of the depôt, five were killed and many

wounded. About the period of 1812, the French government adopted a kind of punishment (which many supposed was pointed out by our own, in order to prevent the recurrence of these continued meetings) towards those who had killed their opponents, by transferring them to depôts where the soldiers and sailors alone were confined. In 1813, during my residence at Bitche, two naval officers, who had been unfortunate in that particular, were sent there. I have ever understood that it is against usage that duels should be fought in fortified places when garrisoned; nevertheless, one took place in the fort. The parties were midshipmen. As it was impossible to procure pistols, the only weapons to be had were fencing foils. The buttons were displaced and the points sharpened. The place of meeting was in the vaulted cellar of which I have spoken, termed St. Giles. It terminated by one of the combatants being run through the right arm. I am not aware that meetings similar to those I have alluded to, ever occurred between the French and English residents at Verdun, which probably was owing

to an opinion entertained by the former, that it was unfair to fight with a prisoner of war. I am very far from asserting that such opinion was general. It was, however, expressed by a French officer who had thought it becoming to use insulting expressions in the presence of our countrymen, when in a Cafè in that place.

END OF VOL. I.